



# The Holy See

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## APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO GREAT BRITAIN

### **ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS MEN AND WOMEN OF SCOTLAND**

*Murrayfield  
Monday, 31 May 1982*

*My brothers and sisters in Christ,*

1. As the Church celebrates Mary's great song of praise to God, the Magnificat, I am very happy to be with you in this Cathedral dedicated to her name. I thank God for your love of Christ and your commitment to his Church.

You represent all the priests and men and women religious of Scotland. You are the closest collaborators of the Bishops in their pastoral ministry. You are present in every area of the community's life, hastening the coming of the Kingdom of God through your prayer and work. In you I feel *the heartbeat of the entire ecclesial community*. In your lives I read the history of the Church in this land, a history of much faith and love. I recognize the contribution made by priests and religious from other lands, especially from Ireland, who have helped to strengthen the Catholic community here. Your presence speaks of hope and vitality for the future.

During my pastoral visits to the various countries of the world, my meeting with the priests and religious are special moments of ecclesial significance. And today, once again, I am able to fulfil my task: *to confirm you in the faith* (Cfr. *Luc. 22, 31*), and to remind you, with Saint Peter, that you have been born anew to a living hope, to an inheritance that is imperishable (Cfr. *1 Petr. 1, 4*).

2. My greeting goes in the first place to the priests, both diocesan and religious, sharers in the one priesthood of Christ the High Priest, "appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer

gifts and sacrifices for sins (*Hebr. 5, 1*). Your presence gives me great joy and fraternal support. In you I recognize the good shepherd, the faithful servant, the sower who goes out to sow the good seed, the labourer in the vineyard, the fisherman who launches his net for a catch. *You are Christ's close friends*: "I call you friends, not servants, for the servant does not know his Master's business" (*Io. 15, 15*).

As priests we must recognize the mystery of grace in our lives. As Saint Paul puts it, we have this ministry "by the mercy of God" (*2 Cor. 4, 1*). It is a gift. It is an act of trust on Christ's part, calling us to be "stewards of the mysteries of God" (*1 Cor. 4, 1*). It is a sacramental configuration with Christ the High Priest. The priesthood is not ours to do with as we please. We cannot re-invent its meaning according to our personal views. Ours is to be true to the One who has called us.

The priesthood is a gift to us. But in us and through us the priesthood is *a gift to the Church*. Let us never separate our priestly life and ministry from full and wholehearted communion with the whole Church. Brothers in the priestly ministry, what does the Church expect from you? The Church expects that you and your brothers and sisters, the religious, will be the first to love her, to hear her voice and follow her inspiration, so that the people of our time may be served effectively.

3. As priests you are at the service of Christ the Teacher (Cfr. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 1). A very important part of your ministry is to preach and teach the Christian message. In the passage that I have already mentioned, Saint Paul describes his own attitude to this ministry: "We refuse to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (*2 Cor. 4, 2*). *We must not tamper with God's word*. We must strive to apply the Good News to the ever-changing conditions of the world but, courageously and at all costs, we must resist the temptation to alter its content, or reinterpret it in order to make it fit the spirit of the present age. The message we preach is not the wisdom of this world (Cfr. *1 Cor. 1, 20*), but *the words of life* that seem like foolishness to the unspiritual man (Cfr. *ibid. 2, 14*). "In their case," Paul continues, "the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God" (*2 Cor. 4, 4*). He goes on: "For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord" (*Ibid. 4, 5*).

We should not be surprised then if *our message of conversion and life* is not always well received. Do everything in your power to present the word as effectively as possible, believe in the power of the word itself, and never become discouraged: "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he knows not how" (*Marc. 4, 26-27*). Yet, in another sense, we do know how the seed grows: "God gives the growth" (*1 Cor. 3, 7*). In this sense we are "God's fellow-workers" (*Ibid. 3, 6*). How careful we must be about our preaching! It should be the continuation of our prayer.

4. We priests share in the priesthood of Christ. We are his ministers, his instruments. But it is

Christ who in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, offer divine life to mankind (Cfr. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 5). With what care, with what love must we celebrate the sacred mysteries! The sacredness of what takes place in our liturgical celebrations must not be obscured. These celebrations must be an experience of prayer and ecclesial communion for all who take part in them.

I know of the many efforts being made to ensure ecclesial *renewal* according to the directives of the Second Vatican Council. I encourage you to continue to develop among the laity a sense of *shared responsibility* for the liturgical and apostolic life of your priesthood, the laity are called to take their proper place in the Church's life according to the grace and charism given to each one. Lead them in the faith. Inspire them and encourage them to work for the wellbeing and growth of the ecclesial family; their contribution is extremely important. Encourage the young, especially, to "desire the higher gifts" (1 Cor. 12, 31). Work closely with them, and also show them the challenge and attractiveness of the priesthood and the religious life.

5. To spend your lives in the service of the People of God, through word and sacrament: this is your great task, your glory, your treasure. But it is Saint Paul again who reminds us: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Cor. 4, 7). The personal experience of each of us is that priestly life come from a full acceptance of our priestly identity. We must love our vocation and mission, but we must also *be seen* to love our priesthood. Let your people see that you are men of prayer. Let them see that you treat the sacred mysteries with love and respect. Let them see that your commitment to peace, justice and truth is sincere, unconditional and brave. Let everyone see that you love the Church, and that you are of one mind and heart with her. What is at stake is *the credibility of our witness!*

6. Brothers and sisters, members of the religious communities! How I wish I could greet each of you personally! To hear from each one of you the "magnalia Dei", how the Holy Spirit works in your lives! In the depths of your hearts, in the struggle between grace and sin, in the various moments and circumstances of your pilgrimage of faith - in how many ways has Christ spoken to you and said: "Come follow me"! Could the Pope come to Scotland and not say thank you for having answered that call? Of course not! So, thank you on behalf of the Church. Thank you for the specific witness you give and for all the gifts you contribute.

Because you have carried your baptismal grace to a degree of "total dedication to God by an act of supreme love" in religious consecration (Cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, 44), you have become a sign of a higher life, a "life that is more than food, a body that is more than clothing" (Luc. 12, 33). Through the practice of the evangelical counsels you have become *a prophetic sign of the eternal kingdom of the Father*. In the midst of the world you point to the "one thing that is needed" (*Ibid.* 10, 42), to the "treasure that does not fail" (*Ibid.* 12, 33). You possess the source of inspiration and of strength for the various forms of apostolic work which your institutes are called to carry out.

7. Those of you who belong to contemplative communities serve the People of God “in the heart of Christ.” You prophetically remind those engaged in building up the earthly city that, unless they lay its foundation in the Lord, they will have laboured in vain. Yours is *a striking witness* to the Gospel message, all the more necessary since the people of our time often succumb to a false sense of independence with respect to the Creator. Your lives testify to the absolute primacy of God and to the kingship of Christ.

8. And you, brothers and sisters, whose vocation is active work in ecclesial service, you must *combine contemplation with your apostolic zeal*. By contemplative prayer you cling to God in mind and heart; by apostolic love and zeal you associate yourselves with the work of redemption and you spread the kingdom of God (Cfr. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 5). In your service to the human family you must take care not to confuse the *Regnum Dei* with the *Regnum hominis*, as if political, social and economic liberation were the same as salvation in Jesus Christ (Cfr. IONANNIS PAULI I *Allocutio*, die 20 sept. 1978: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo I*, p. 74). Your prophetic role in the Church should lead you to discover and proclaim the deepest meaning of all human activity. Only when human activity preserves its relationship with the Creator does it preserve its dignity and reach fulfilment.

Your communities have been engaged in the process of renewal desired by the Second Vatican Council. You are trying to be ever more faithful to your role within the ecclesial community, in accordance with your specific charisms. Proceeding from the original inspiration of your founders and following the Magisterium of the Church, you are in an excellent position to discern the promptings of the Holy Spirit regarding the needs of the Church and the world today. Through appropriate exterior adaptation accompanied by constant spiritual conversion, your life and activity, within the context of the local and universal Church, becomes a magnificent expression of the Church’s own vitality and youth.

In the words of Saint Paul: “I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world” (*Rom.* 1, 8).

9. Brothers and sisters, there is one who walks beside us along the path of discipleship: Mary, the Mother of Jesus, who pondered everything in her heart and always did the will of the Father (Cfr. *Luc.* 2, 51; *Marc.* 3, 35). In this Metropolitan Cathedral dedicated to her, I wish to return to the thoughts and sentiments that filled my heart at Fatima on 13 May. There I once again consecrated to her myself and my ministry: *Totus Tuus Ego Sum*. I re-consecrated, and entrusted to her maternal protection, the Church and the whole world, so much in need of wisdom and peace. These are some of the invocations I addressed to the Immaculate Heart of Mary at Fatima:

From famine and war, *deliver us*.

“From nuclear war, from incalculable self-destruction, from every kind of war, *deliver us*.”

“From sins against the life of man from its very beginning, *deliver us*.

“From hatred and from the demeaning of the dignity of the children of God, *deliver us*.

“From every kind of injustice in the life of society, both national and international, *deliver us*.

“From readiness to trample on the commandments of God, *deliver us*.

“From attempts to stifle in human hearts the very truth of God, *deliver us*.

“From sins against the Holy Spirit, deliver us, *deliver us*.

“Accept, O Mother of Christ, this cry *laden with the sufferings* of all individual human beings, laden with the sufferings of whole societies.

“Let there be revealed, once more, in the history of the world the infinite power of *merciful Love*. May it put a stop to evil. May it transform consciences. May your Immaculate Heart reveal for all the *light of hope*”.

And to each priest and deacon, to each religious brother and sister, to each seminarian, I leave a *word of encouragement* and a message of hope. With Saint Paul I say to you: “This explains why we work and struggle as we do; our hopes are fixed on the living God . . .” (*1 Tim. 4, 10*). Yes, dear brothers and sisters, our hopes are fixed on the living God!

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