



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND CANADA

MEETING WITH THE STUDENTS

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Immaculate Conception School (Los Angeles)
Wednesday, 16 September 1987

Dear Students of Immaculate Conception School,

It is a real pleasure for me to visit your school today, together with your Archbishop and with Mrs Reagan, the wife of the President of the United States. When I speak about visiting your school I mean visiting *you!*

1. I consider *your school* - and all the other parochial schools in America - *to be very important* for your future and for the future of the Church and of your country.

In this school, you learn not only reading, writing and arithmetic, but also - and most important- *religion*. You learn about God, about God's Son, Jesus Christ, and about God's love. You learn that God made you to know him, to love him and to serve him in this life and to be happy with him forever in the next. You learn how much *God loves you* and how much he wants you to share that love with others, as Jesus taught us.

You learn to love God, and to see his image and *to love him* in your parents, your teachers, your fellow students, and *in all God's children*. You learn to love your country and all the people in it, no matter who they are. And you learn to love the people outside the United States, those in other countries - both near and far away.

You learn how important it is, in order to be truly happy, *to follow God's commandments*. You learn how important it is therefore to be truthful, honest, kind and considerate, and to avoid cheating and fighting and lying. You learn to know the difference between good and bad influence, and how important it is to avoid those things - such as the use of drugs - which hurt yourselves and others and which give offence to God. Sometimes they can even destroy your lives and the lives of others. You have seen this happen around you.

2. In short, in this school you learn how to live in a way that is *pleasing to God* and that will bring *happiness and peace to you, your families and your community*. You learn skills that help you to become a more complete person and a more conscientious citizen, and prepare you for your future. You learn how to be morally good and how to build a better society.

One of the most important things you can ever learn here is *to pray*: to speak to God, to express what is in your heart, to show your dependence on him, to thank him for the gift of life, for your families, and for everything you have received. Here you also learn how to pray as a community, at Mass, together with Christ and with each other.

3. For many, many years, Catholic schools - such as Immaculate Conception - have been *an important part of education in the United States of America*. They have truly helped to form this nation. Catholic schools have educated the first Americans, the Native Americans; they have educated black Americans and white Americans and the children of immigrants *from every race and from every nation* - and indeed from many *different religious denominations*. Catholic schools continue to provide not only a vision of life's purpose but a gateway to life's opportunities.

Students of Immaculate Conception School: you can be proud of your school. Make sure that your school can always be proud of you. *Your parents, your parish and your archdiocese* have made great efforts to give you this Catholic education. Do not let them down.

4. Finally, dear boys and girls, I ask you to do me a favour: *to think frequently about these words of Jesus*: "Treat others the way you would have them treat you" (*Matth. 7, 12*). The words that are important in life are not "me", but "others"; not "to get", but "to give", and "to serve" - *to give and to serve* the way Jesus did, with love and sacrifice *for others*.

May God bless you, and your teachers, and your families, and all *those who work and sacrifice* to make this school and every Catholic school a place that prepares students to lead a good Christian life and to be happy with God for ever in heaven.

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana