



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO CANADA

(SEPTEMBER 9-20, 1984) **HOMILY OF POPE JOHN PAUL II** *St. John's «Quidi Vidi Lake»*

Wednesday, 12 September 1984 Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, **1.** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God! These words we take from the very heart of the Eucharistic liturgy. Eucharist means thanksgiving. Today, as we meet around this altar, our first desire is to give thanks - to give thanks with the Archdiocese of Saint John's and with the whole Church throughout Newfoundland, as it celebrates the two hundredth anniversary of its establishment on the island. In this way we wish to express what is the most characteristic element of the Eucharistic liturgy. Our sacrifice and our prayer in union with the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ - in the sacramental identification with him - is above all a great act of thanksgiving by the Church. This thanksgiving has shaped the spiritual life of those who have been the disciples and confessors of the Redeemer in Canada from the very foundations, from the very roots. The liturgy that we are celebrating is meant in a special way to express the fact that the sons and daughters of Newfoundland, Labrador and all of this land, rooted as they are in the mystery of Christ, cry aloud to God with full hearts: "Let us give thanks to the Lord our God". **2.** We give thanks for all the richness of creation. In particular for the richness that has been shared in by the succeeding generations in Canada. Both by the generations that lived here in the past, according to the principles of their original culture, and also by the generations that have come here from beyond the sea, gradually building up the structures of a new civilization and Canadian culture. We give thanks to the Lord for the opportunities that countless families have found here over the years, and for the freedom and hope that they have enjoyed. And so we cry aloud with the Psalmist: "How good is the Lord to all, / compassionate to all his creature. / All your creatures shall thank you, O Lord, / and your friends shall repeat their blessing. / They shall speak of the glory of your reign and declare your might O God" (*Ps. 145 (144), 9-11*). And as we praise God for the beauty of nature found in this island and throughout all Canada let us reread with eyes of faith the testimony borne by created things: in this way our minds and hearts turn to him who on the seventh day saw what he had made and "it was very good" (*Gen. 1, 31*). **3.** Our thanksgiving rises from created things to God himself. We thank God for his existence: for the fact that he is God, for his Godhead, for his omnipotence and holiness, for his truth and love, for his eternal plan for the salvation of man and the world. We thank the Father for the Son and the Holy Spirit. We thank the Son for the Father. We thank the Holy Spirit because through the love of the Father and the Son he is the uncreated Gift: the source of all the gifts of created grace. The Apostle Paul writes: "This is what I pray, kneeling before the Father, from whom every family, whether spiritual or natural, takes its name: Out of his infinite glory may he give you the power through his Spirit for your hidden self to grow strong" (*Eph. 3, 14-16*). Man looks into his own heart, into "the hidden self", and he offers up thanksgiving to the very mystery of the Godhead. For he, man, has been created "in the image and likeness of God" (*Gen. 1, 26*), and he is now called for this reason to give particular thanksgiving. We give thanks to God for the fact that he is God in whom is found the eternal Model of our human essence. We thank him for the Godhead, for the inscrutable mystery of the Trinity, for the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **4.** We give thanks for

everything that is the work and fruit of grace, whereby human hearts share in the intimate life of God himself. For this is how Paul continues to write: ". . . so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love, you will with all the saints have strength to grasp the breadth and length, the height and depth; until, knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, you are filled with all the fullness of God" (*Eph. 3, 17-19*). We give thanks to God for the fact that he is God: for this absolute fullness that he is. And we also give thanks for this dimension of our humanity, which is our sharing in God's nature, in the intimate life of God. We give thanks for grace and holiness. In a particular way for the grace and holiness that in the course of the centuries has been shared in and continues to be shared in by the sons and daughters of this land: "Bless the God of all things, / the doer of great deeds everywhere, / who has exalted our days from the womb / and acted toward us according in his mercy" (*Sir. 50, 22*).⁵ Indeed, we give thanks for the fact that he, God, allows us, human beings, to share in the messianic mission of Jesus Christ, his eternal Son who became man. We thank him for the fact that he has made us the People of God and has sealed our mission on earth with the priestly, prophetic and royal seal through our sharing in the mission of Christ himself. Christ says to us in today's Gospel: "You are the salt of the earth. But if salt becomes tasteless, what can make it salty again? . . . You are the light of the world. A city built on a hilltop cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lampstand where it shines for everyone in the house" (*Matth. 5, 13. 15*). These are eloquent words, demanding words. And in the light of these words we give thanks for our Christian vocation. We wish to understand this vocation in all its different forms, and to penetrate it with the light of faith and of our life-blood. We want to fulfil it. We truly want to fulfil it! How else can we express our thanks for the gift of our vocation in Jesus Christ?⁶ We offer a very special act of thanksgiving at this time for our Christian families. In union with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, we thank the Father "from whom every family takes its name". We thank him:- For all those many families throughout Canada whose lives reflect "the beauty and grandeur of the vocation to love and the service of life" (Ioannis Pauli PP. II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 1).- For the deep love that Christian spouses communicate to each other in the communion of married life, as they keep alive in the world an altogether special image of God's love.- For the lives of mutual fidelity lived by countless couples through the power of sacramental grace.- For all those couples who generously endeavour to follow God's plan for human love as expressed in the Church's teaching in "*Humanae Vitae*" and "*Familiaris Consortio*", and whose marriage is always open to new life; and for all those who help educate couples in Natural Family Planning.- For the great and unique service given by parents in providing new members for the Mystical Body of Christ.- For the day-in and day-out efforts made by fathers and mothers in educating their children to Christian maturity.- For the families who amidst pain, sorrow and economic distress live lives of Christian hope.- For the commitment of families, in accordance with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, to share actively in the mission of the Church, as a believing and evangelizing community and as a community in dialogue with God and in the service of man.- For the efforts made by Christian families to help young people understand the dignity of marriage and to prepare themselves adequately for this vocation.- For the renewed commitment of the Church to uphold and explain the sanctity and unity of the family, and for the generous love with which so many priests and religious expend their energies for the building up of family life.- For the efforts of families who have experienced problems and difficulties, but who have persevered, being convinced that God's everlasting and unbreakable love is expressed in the indissoluble covenant of their own sacramental marriage.- For the special witness given to Christ's teaching on the indissolubility of marriage by all spouses who suffer the pain of separation, abandonment or rejection.- For the transmission of the Gospel message in Christian homes, and for the evangelization carried out by Christian families in their neighbourhoods and places of work.- For those many families that pray together and find strength in worshipping God.- For the families that embrace the Cross, and in Christian joy live their share in the Paschal Mystery of the Lord Jesus.- Yes, we give thanks and praise to God our Father for all the Christian families - and

they are a mighty legion - who listen to those life-giving words of Jesus Christ his Son: "Your light must shine in the sight of men, so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven" (*Matth.* 5, 16).⁷ Puissent toutes les familles chrétiennes du monde, et puissions-nous tous aussi, répondre à notre vocation chrétienne, chacun selon les dons reçus! Chacun de nous, par le témoignage de ses bonnes œuvres. Que chacun de nous entende l'appel à rendre gloire à notre Père qui est aux cieux, à rendre grâce au Seigneur notre Dieu! Rendre grâce, c'est manifester la gloire de Dieu en chacun de nous. L'homme, que Dieu a placé au milieu du monde visible- l'homme que Dieu a associé au mystère de la création et au mystère de la rédemption par sa grâce - cet homme est appelé à la gloire. Tandis qu'il manifeste - en rendant grâce - la gloire de Dieu qui est présente en toutes choses, l'homme reçoit en lui-même l'assurance de la gloire à venir qui sera révélée en lui. Beloved brothers and sisters of Newfoundland, Labrador and all Canada: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God! It is right to give him thanks and praise. Amen. © Copyright 1984 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana