



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO PARIS, ON THE OCCASION OF THE
12th WORLD YOUTH DAY
(AUGUST 21-24, 1997)

MASS FOR THE YOUTH FORUM

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Saint-Étienne du Mont
Saturday, 23 August 1997

1. "May all peoples know you, Lord!" These words of today's liturgy are addressed to all of you, representing the nations taking part in the World Youth Day in Paris. Your presence here bears witness to the success of the mission which the Apostles received from Christ after his resurrection: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19). You are the representatives of the peoples to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have accepted it, of the peoples whose cultures the Gospel has penetrated and transfigured.

You are here not only because you have received the faith and Baptism, but also because you want to transmit this faith to others. So many hearts await the Gospel! The cry of today's liturgy can find all its meaning on your lips: "May all the nations know you, Lord!"

2. The World Youth Day clearly has a missionary dimension. Today's liturgy indicates as much. The first reading from the Book of Isaiah says: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace, who brings good tidings of good, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns'" (52:7). The prophet is certainly thinking of the messiah awaited at that time. This will be Christ the Messiah, who will announce the Good News. Indeed, he will transmit this Good News to the Apostles. By sharing in his prophetic,

priestly, and royal mission, they, and in turn all the People of God of the New Covenant, will become messengers of Good News to the whole world. The words of the prophet apply to them: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings".

These words apply to you who are gathered here, you who participate in the World Youth Day from all the nations under the sun. Your coming together is like a new Pentecost. And so it should be! Like the Apostles in the Upper Room, and beyond what our senses perceive, we must hear the sound, the irruption of a violent wind. May the tongues of fire of the Holy Spirit come to rest over the heads of all those who are here, and may all begin to proclaim in different languages the marvels of God (cf. Acts 2:1-4). Then you will be witnesses to the Good News in the Third Millennium.

3. The reading of the Gospel of Saint Matthew makes us think back to the parable of the sower. We know the parable, but we can re-read the words of the Gospel over and over again and still find new light. So the sower comes out to sow. As he sows, some seeds fall on the path, some on rocky ground, some among thorns, some finally on good soil, and only these last gave fruit (cf. Mt 13:3-8).

Jesus did not limit himself to presenting us with a parable, he explained it. Let us hear then the explanation of the parable of the sower. The seeds that fell on the path represent those who hear the word of the Kingdom of God but do not understand it. The Evil One comes and takes away what has been sown in their hearts (cf. Mt 13:19). The Evil One often uses this tactic and he tries to prevent the seed from germinating in people's hearts. This is the first comparison. The second is the seed fallen on rocky ground. This ground represents the people who hear the word and welcome it immediately with joy, but they do not have roots in them and are inconstant. When tribulation or persecution comes because of the word, they fall away immediately (cf. Mt 13:20-21). What psychological insight in this comparison made by Christ! We know well from our experience and the experience of others the inconstancy of people deprived of the roots which would enable the word to grow! The third case is the seed fallen among thorns. Christ explains that he is thinking of those who hear the word but who, because of the worries of the world and their attachment to riches, stifle the word so that it does not bear fruit (cf. Mt 13:22).

Finally, the seed fallen on fertile ground represents those who hear the word and understand it, and the word bears fruit in them (cf. Mt 13:23). All of this magnificent parable speaks to us today as it spoke to the listeners of Jesus two thousand years ago. In the course of this world meeting of youth, let us become the fertile ground which receives the Gospel and bears fruit!

4. Bearing in mind that the human soul hesitates to welcome the word of God, let us address the Spirit with this ardent liturgical prayer:

Veni Creator Spiritus

*Mentes tuorum visitas,
Imple superna gratia,
Quae tu creasti pectora.*

Come, O Creator Spirit,
Visit the souls of those who belong to you;
Fill with your grace from on high
The hearts which you have made.

In this prayer we open our hearts, imploring the Spirit to fill them with light and life.

Spirit of God, make us ready to receive your visit. Make faith in the word which saves grow in us. Be the living source of the hope which blossoms in our lives. Be in us the breath of love which transforms us, and the fire of charity which impels us to give ourselves to the service of our brothers and sisters.

You whom the Father has sent, teach us all things and make us grasp the richness of the word of Christ. Strengthen our inner being, make us pass from fear to confidence, so that the praise of your glory may burst forth from us.

Be the light that fills people's hearts and gives them the courage to seek you unceasingly. You, Spirit of truth, lead us to the entire Truth, so that we may firmly proclaim the mystery of the living God who is active in our history. Enlighten us as to the ultimate meaning of this history.

Take away the unfaithfulness which separates us from you. Cast out from us all resentment and division. Make the spirit of brotherhood and unity grow in us, so that we may know how to build the city of man in the peace and solidarity that come from God.

Help us to discover that love is the most intimate part of divine life, and that we are called to share in it. Teach us how to love one another as the Father has loved us by giving us his Son (cf. Jn 3:16).

May all peoples know you, God, Father of all, whom your Son Jesus has come to reveal to us, you who have sent us your Spirit in order to give us the fruits of redemption!

5. This morning I cordially greet the members of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, who organize the International Youth Forum which has brought you together for this time of reflection and prayer. I thank all those who have ensured the success of this encounter, particularly the persons responsible for the *École Polytechnique*, who have hosted it with willing generosity.

Dear friends, yesterday in the Cathedral of Notre-Dame of Paris, I beatified Frédéric Ozanam, a

laymen and young person like yourselves. I gladly recall this in this church of Saint-Étienne du Mont, since it was here that he initiated his first activities with other young people in favour of the poor of the neighbourhood. Enlightened by the Spirit of Christ and faithful to daily meditation on the word, Blessed Frédéric provides us with an ideal of holiness for today, that of the gift of self at the service of the most needy in society. I hope that in your memories of this Twelfth World Youth Day he will stand out as a friend and model for you in your witness as Christian young people!

6. During the course of the intense days which you have spent here, you too have gone in search of Christ and you have let yourselves be penetrated by the Word, so that it may blossom and bear fruit. Having had an exceptional experience of the universality of the Church and of the patrimony common to all the disciples of Christ, you have given thanks for the marvels which God brings about in the heart of humanity. You have also shared the sufferings, anxieties, hopes and longings of the people of today.

This morning, the Holy Spirit sends you like "a letter from Christ", to proclaim in each of your countries the works God has done, and to be ardent witnesses of the Gospel of Christ among people of good will to the ends of the earth. The mission which has been entrusted to you requires that, throughout the whole of your lives, you take the time needed for your spiritual and doctrinal formation, in order that you may deepen your own faith and, in turn, deepen the faith of others. Thus you will answer the call "to growth and to a continual process of maturation, of always bearing much fruit" (*Christifideles Laici*, 57).

May this time of spiritual renewal which you have lived together commit you to advance with all your Christian brothers and sisters in the search of the unity which Christ wishes. May he lead you with fraternal charity to meet the men and women who have other religious or intellectual convictions, so as to advance in the authentic knowledge and mutual respect which lead us to grow in our humanity. The Spirit of God sends you with your brothers and sister of the whole world to be builders of a reconciled civilization founded on fraternal love. At the advent of the Third Millennium, I invite you to be attentive to the voice and the signs of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in the world. Contemplating and imitating the Virgin Mary, model of living faith, you will then be true disciples of Christ, her divine Son, the foundation of hope, the source of life. My very dear young people, the Church has need of you; she needs your commitment at the service of the Gospel. The Pope too counts on you. Receive the fire of the Spirit of the Lord to become fervent heralds of the Good News!