



# The Holy See

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APOSTOLIC JOURNEY

OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

TO THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC **HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II**

*Rožňava*

*Saturday, 13 September 2003*

1. “I beg you brothers to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called” (*Eph 4:1*). The pressing invitation of the Apostle Paul to the Christian community of Ephesus takes on special meaning for us congregated here. To every believer is entrusted, in the diversity of vocations and charisms, the task of being both disciple and apostle: *disciple*, by humbly listening to the word that saves; *apostle* by giving passionate witness of a life formed by the Gospel.

A Slovak proverb says: “Words admonish, examples move”. Yes, dear Brothers and Sisters, you too, with the “style” of your Christian life, can make a great contribution to the evangelisation of today’s world and to the construction of a more just and more fraternal society. And so I say with the Apostle Paul: “Consider your calling” (1 *Cor 1:26*).

2. With affection, in the name of the Lord, I greet all of you, sons and daughters of this local Church, beginning with your Bishop, the Most Reverend Eduard Kojnok, whom I thank for the cordial words of welcome extended to me, together with his Coadjutor, Bishop Vladimír Filo. I am pleased to see the Bishops present and the pilgrims who have come from other Dioceses. I greet the civil and military authorities, especially the President of the Slovak Republic. I thank all of you for the welcome offered to me and for the many efforts dedicated to the preparation of my visit.

*in Hungarian*

I wish to address a special word to *the Hungarian-speaking community* so numerous in this region and an integrated part of this Diocese. Proud of your traditions, dear Brothers and Sisters, and faithful to the teachings of your Ancestors, you keep your faith firm and your hope alive and you draw strength from your attachment to Christ and to his Church. Your presence constantly

enriches Slovakia, and I know that the Pastors of this local Church are attentive to meet your spiritual aspirations, while always safeguarding ecclesial unity, a factor of human and spiritual growth for the entire Slovak society.

*In Slovak:*

3. Dear Brothers and Sisters, my journey from Bratislava and from Košice, gave me the opportunity to admire *vast cultivated areas*, which are a witness to your work and effort. My thoughts go with great sympathy to *all who are dedicated to agriculture* and who by their dedication offer an indispensable contribution to the life of the Nation. I greet you with affection. In the Gospel parable which we have just heard proclaimed, Jesus compares himself to the sower, who sows the seed of his word confidently in the soil of human hearts.

*The fruit does not depend on the seed alone*, but also on the diverse conditions of the soil, that is to say, on each one of us. Let us listen to the explanation of the parable that Jesus himself has given. The seed eaten up by the birds calls to mind the intervention of the Evil One who brings to the heart misunderstanding of God's way (cf. *Mk 8:33*), which is always the way of the Cross.

The seed without roots describes that situation in which the Word is only externally received, without that deep allegiance to Christ and personal love for him (cf. *Col 2:7*), which alone would allow it to be retained.

The choked seed symbolises the worries of the present life, the attraction of power, affluence, pride.

4. The word does not bear fruit automatically, even though it is divine –and therefore all-powerful–; *it adapts to the conditions of the soil*, or better, it accepts the response that the soil gives, which can also be negative. This is a Mystery of God's condescension, who goes so far even as to place himself completely in human hands! Because in reality, the seed fallen on the different soils is Jesus himself (cf. *Jn 12,24*).

Reading this parable and the explanation given by Jesus to his disciples arouses in us *a necessary reflection*. We, Dear Brothers and Sisters, are the soil in which the Lord tirelessly plants the seed of his word and his love. With what attitude do we receive it? How much fruit do we allow it to bring forth?

5. Saint John Chrysostom, whose memorial we celebrate in today's liturgy, writes: "I have with me his word; this is my staff, my protection... This is my strength and my defence" (cf. *Homilies before Exile*, 1-3: PG 52, 428).

The Pope entrusts to all of you today *the treasure of this word*; just like a confident sower who

plants in the secret of each heart the “good news” of the Kingdom. Be the good and fruitful soil which, with the abundance of its produce, comforts the expectations of the Church and of the world.

“Human efforts are useless when not blessed by God”, says wisely another one of your proverbs. I invoke therefore upon you and upon your commitment to the Christian way of life the abundant blessings of the Most High.

Be faithful to God, observe his commandments. Defend life and be faithful to the Church and to your nation, Slovakia. Amen!

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