



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO BERN
ON THE OCCASION OF THE NATIONAL MEETING
OF THE YOUNG CATHOLICS OF SWITZERLAND

MASS AT ALMEND ESPLANADE IN BERN

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

*Solemnity of the Holy Trinity
Sunday, 6 June 2004*

1. *"Blessed be God the Father and his Only-Begotten Son and the Holy Spirit: for he has shown that he loves us" (Opening Prayer).*

On this first Sunday after Pentecost, the Church invites us to celebrate the mystery of the Holy Trinity. We do so, dear brothers and sisters, in a *superb setting* of snowy peaks and green valleys covered with an abundance of flowers and fruits and numerous lakes and springs that make your Land beautiful. Our meditation is guided by the first reading which brings us to contemplate divine Wisdom: *"When [God] established the heavens... when he made firm the skies above..., when he established the fountains of the deep, when he assigned to the sea its limit... when he marked out the foundations of the earth..."* (Prov 8: 27-29).

Yet, we should not only turn our gaze toward creation, *"the work of God's hands"* (*Responsorial Psalm*); it should be especially attentive *to the people around us*. I greet you with affection, dear brothers and sisters of this marvellous region in the heart of Europe. I would like to shake hands with each one of you to greet you personally and say to you: "The Lord is with you and he loves you!".

I extend a fraternal greeting to the Bishops of Switzerland with their President, Bishop Amédée Grab of Coire, as well as Bishop Kurt Koch of Basel, whom I thank for his words on behalf of you

all. I address my respectful greetings to the President of the Swiss Confederation as well as to the Authorities who have honoured us with their presence.

Lastly, I address a special greeting full of affection to all *the young Catholics of Switzerland*, whom I met yesterday evening at the Bern Expo Palace. There we heard together Jesus' demanding, stirring invitation: "*Arise!*". Dear young friends, may you know that the Pope loves you, that he accompanies you in his daily prayers, that he is counting on your collaboration to proclaim the Gospel and encourages you to advance confidently on the path of Christian life.

2. "*We joyfully proclaim our faith... You have revealed your glory*", we will say in the Preface. Our Eucharistic Assembly is a witness and proclamation of the glory of the Most High and of his active presence in history. Sustained by the Spirit, whom the Father sent to us through the Son, "*we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope*" (Rom 5: 3-4).

Dear friends, I ask the Lord to be a *witness of hope* among you, a witness of that hope that "*does not disappoint*" because it is founded on God's love, "poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5: 5). Today, the world is especially in need of this: a *supplement of hope!*

3. "*You are one Lord, one God*" (Preface). The three Persons, equal and separate, are one God. Their real distinction *does not divide the unity of their divine nature*.

Christ proposed this immensely deep communion to us, his disciples, as a model: "*that they may all be one, even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me*" (Jn 17: 21). The celebration of the mystery of the Blessed Trinity is a *strong appeal for the commitment to unity*. It is an appeal that *involves everyone*, Pastors and faithful alike, and impels all to a renewed consciousness of their personal responsibility in the Church, the Bride of Christ. How is it possible, in the face of these words of Christ, not to feel the *goad of ecumenism*? I reaffirm also on this occasion *the desire to advance on the path to full communion with all believers, albeit difficult, yet full of joy*.

It is certain, however, that a strong contribution to the ecumenical cause derives from the commitment of Catholics to living inner unity. In the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, I stressed the need "to make the Church *the home and the school of communion*" (n. 43), keeping the eyes of the heart fixed "on the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us" (*ibid.*). In this way we foster that "spirituality of communion" which, departing from the places where people and Christians are formed, reaches the parishes, associations and movements. A local Church in which the spirituality of communion flourishes will be able *to purify herself constantly from the "toxins" of selfishness* that give rise to jealousy, diffidence, manias for self-affirmation and harmful

contrasts.

4. May calling to mind these risks inspire in us a spontaneous *prayer to the Holy Spirit* whom Jesus promised to send to us: "*When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth*" (Jn 16: 13).

What is the truth? One day Jesus said: "*I am the way, and the truth and the life*" (Jn 14: 6). Thus, the correct formulation of the question is not "*what is the truth?*", but "*who is the truth?*".

It is this question too that men and women of the third millennium are asking themselves. Dear brothers and sisters, we cannot be silent with the answer because we know it! *The truth is Jesus Christ*, who came into the world to reveal to us and give to us the Father's love. We are called to *witness to this truth* with words and especially with life!

5. Dear friends, *the Church is mission!* Today she also needs "prophets" who can reawaken in the communities faith in the revealing Word of God, who is rich in mercy (cf. Eph 2: 4). The time has come for preparing *young generations of apostles* who are not afraid to proclaim the Gospel. It is essential for every baptized person to pass from *a faith of habit* to a *mature faith* that is expressed in clear, convinced and courageous personal choices.

Only such a faith, celebrated and shared in the liturgy and in fraternal charity, can nourish and fortify the community of the Lord's disciples and build it up into a missionary Church, free from false fears because she is certain of the Father's love.

6. "*The love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit*" (Rom 5: 5). It is not our merit; *it is a free gift*. Despite the burden of our sins, God has loved us and has redeemed us in the Blood of Christ. His grace has healed us in our inner depths.

Therefore, we can exclaim with the Psalmist: "*How great is your name, O Lord our God, through all the earth!*". How great it is in me, in others, in every human being!

This is *the true source of the greatness of man*, this is the root of his *indestructible dignity*. The image of God is mirrored in every human being. This is the deepest truth about man that can never be ignored or violated. In short, *every violation by man turns out to be a violation against his Creator*, who loves him with the love of a Father.

Switzerland has *a great tradition concerning respect for the human being*. It is a tradition under the banner of the Cross: the *Red Cross!*

Christians of this noble Country, may you always remember your exalted past! May you recognize and honour God's image in every human being! The glory of the Blessed Trinity is reflected in human beings, created by God.

Let us say, therefore: *"Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, the God who is, who was and who is to come (Gospel Acclamation). Amen!*