



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
FOR THE WORLD MISSION DAY 1995**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. "The Church has received the Gospel as a proclamation and a source of joy and salvation. She has received it as a gift from Jesus, sent by the Father 'to preach the good news to the poor' (Lk 4:18). She has received it through the Apostles, sent by Christ to the whole world (cf. Mk 16:15; Mt 28:19-20). Born from this evangelizing activity, the Church hears every day the echo of Saint Paul's words of warning: 'Woe to me, if I do not preach the Gospel' (1 Cor 9:16)" (*Evangelium vitae*, n. 78).

Gift of the Father to humanity and continuation of the mission of the Son, the Church knows she exists in order to carry the joyful news of the Gospel to the ends of the earth, until the close of the age (cf. Mt 28:19-20).

The missionary mandate is therefore always valid and timely, and it commits Christians to be joyful witnesses to the Good News for those near and far, making available their energies, means and even their lives.

Mission passes through the Cross and the gift of self: like the risen Lord, those invested with mission are called to show their brothers and sisters signs of love, so as to overcome their disbelief and their fears.

"You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has descended upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Welcoming with joy the call to co-operate in the mission of salvation, every Christian knows he can count on the presence of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. This certainty gives vigour to his Gospel service and leads him to be bold and full of hope despite difficulties, danger, indifference

and failures.

World Mission Day is the occasion to implore from the Lord an ever greater zeal for evangelization: the first and greatest service which Christians can offer the women and men of our time marked by hatred, violence, injustice and, in particular, by the loss of the true meaning of life. In fact, nothing helps us to face the conflict between life and death in which we are immersed more than faith in the Son of God who became man and came among men so that they might "have life and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10): it is faith in the risen Lord who has overcome death; it is faith in the blood of Christ whose voice is more eloquent than that of Abel, and which gives hope and restores to mankind its true image.

Proclaim Christ in word and deed

2. *Courage, do not be afraid, proclaim that Jesus is the Lord: "And there is salvation in no one else!"* (Acts 4:12).

May the annual Mission Day find the whole Church ready to proclaim the truth and the love of God especially to the men and women not yet reached by the Good News of Jesus Christ!

Dear missionaries, with deep affection and gratitude I address *you* first of all, and in particular, those who are suffering for the name of Jesus.

Tell everyone that "true liberation consists in opening oneself to the love of Christ. In him, and only in him, are we set free from all alienation and doubt, from slavery to the power of sin and death" (*Redemptoris missio*, n. 11). He is the Way and the Truth, the Resurrection and the Life (cf. Jn 14:6; 11:25). He is the "Word of life"! (cf. Jn 1:1).

Proclaim Christ with the word, proclaim him with concrete gestures of solidarity, make his love for mankind visible by taking your place with the Church and in the Church, always "in the front line in providing charitable help"; where "so many of her sons and daughters, especially men and women religious, in traditional and ever new forms, have consecrated and continue to consecrate their lives to God, freely giving of themselves out of love for their neighbour, especially the weak and the needy" (*Evangelium vitae*, n. 27).

Your special vocation *ad gentes* and *ad vitam* retains all its validity: it represents the paradigm of the whole Church's missionary commitment, which is always in need of a radical and total gift of self, of new and ardent impulses. You have dedicated your life to God in order to witness among the nations to the risen Lord: do not let yourselves be discouraged by doubt, difficulty, rejection, persecution; revive the grace of your special vocation and continue without faltering along the path you have taken with so much faith and generosity (cf. *Redemptoris missio*, n. 66).

3. I address this same exhortation to the *Churches of ancient and of recent foundation, to their Bishops* "consecrated not for one Diocese alone, but for the salvation of the whole world" (*Ad gentes* n. 38), often tried by a lack of vocations and means. In a singular way I address *those Christian communities in minority situations*.

Listening again to the words of the Master: "Fear not little flock, for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Lk 12:32), let faith in the one Redeemer shine forth, give a reason for the hope that is in you and bear witness to the love with which, in Jesus Christ, you have been inwardly renewed.

To be artisans of the new evangelization, every Christian community must make its own the logic of self-giving and gratuitousness which finds in the mission *ad gentes* not only an opportunity to sustain those in spiritual and material need, but above all an extraordinary possibility for growth towards maturity of faith.

4. The courageous proclamation of the Gospel is especially entrusted *to you, young people*. In Manila I reminded you that the Lord "will make many demands on you. He will require the fullest commitment of your whole being to the spreading of the Gospel and to the service of his People. But do not be afraid! His demands are also the measure of his love for each of you personally" (Homily during Mass with International Youth Forum 13 January 1995; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 18 January 1995, p. 3). Do not let yourselves be saddened or impoverished by turning in on yourselves; open your minds and hearts to the boundless horizons of missionary activity. Do not be afraid! If the Lord calls you to leave your own country and go to other peoples, other cultures, other ecclesial communities, respond generously to his invitation. I wish to repeat once again: "Come with me into the third millennium to save the world!" (cf. *ibid*).

Every mission is inspired by the Spirit

Always be bold in proclaiming the Lord Jesus *to families, to priests, to religious and to all those who believe in Christ!* Every believer is called to cooperate in spreading the Gospel and to live the mission spirit and activity in the free gift of self to his brothers and sisters. As I recalled in the Encyclical *Evangelium vitae*, we are a people who are sent and we know that "on our journey we are guided and sustained by the law of love: a love which has as its source and model the Son of God made man who by dying gave life to the world" (n. 79).

5. Dear brothers and sisters! May Mission Sunday be for all Christians a great opportunity to prove our love for Christ and for our neighbour. May it also be a suitable time to realize that each of us must see that prayers, sacrifice and concrete support for the missions, the outposts of the civilization of love, are not lacking. Every missionary project is inspired by the Holy Spirit, who brings it to fulfilment.

As I encourage and bless all those actively engaged in missionary activity, my thoughts go in particular to those responsible for the Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith, whose task it is to organize this Day, and to those who work in the other Pontifical Mission Societies, indispensable structures of formation for co-operation and precious instruments for supporting all missionaries, equally and attentively.

May Mary, Queen of Evangelization, sustain and guide the precious work of the Gospel labourers and give Christians ever new joy and enthusiasm to proclaim Jesus Christ by their words and with their lives.

To all of you, as a comfort in your respective duties in the service of the Gospel, I send a special Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 11 June 1995, the Solemnity of the Blessed Trinity, the 17th year of my Pontificate.