



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
FOR THE WORLD MISSION DAY 1993**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10).

With these words Jesus explains the meaning and purpose of his mission to the world. During the 2,000 years of her history, the Church has always borne this message, irradiating throughout the world the culture of life. Still today, guided by Christ and sustained by the Spirit, she continues to announce the *Gospel of life*.

Soon this "Good News" will ring out vigorously in Denver, during the world gathering of young people on the occasion of the Eighth World Youth Day. It is an announcement of salvation, associated with the kingdom of God, and it is entrusted to all believers. As I underlined in the Encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, the Gospel "is not a concept, a doctrine, or a programme subject to free interpretation; rather, it is before all a *person* with the face and name of Jesus of Nazareth, the image of the invisible God" (n. 18). In fact, he who said, "I am the Life" (Jn 14:6), is able to satisfy to the full the human heart's insatiable yearning for life by grafting human life, through Baptism, into God's own life.

2. Education to the *Gospel of life*: this is the immense task facing the family and indeed the whole Christian community, regarding young people from early infancy. This fundamental intuition inspired the Bishop Charles de Forbin-Janson of Nancy, France, in 1843, to found the Holy Childhood Mission Society, an institution celebrating this year its 150th anniversary. The service which this society, later granted the title "Pontifical", renders to the Church on every continent reveals itself to be ever more precious and providential. It helps to stimulate among children missionary activity in favour of their brothers and sisters. It upholds children's rights to grow in their dignity as human beings and as believers, leading them, above all, to fulfil their desire to know,

love and serve God. Young people's cooperation in the work of evangelization is more than ever necessary: the Church places great hope in children's ability to change the world.

Promotion of missionary vocations is still urgent

3. On the occasion of World Mission Sunday, I wish to invite believers throughout the world, particularly parents, educators, catechists and consecrated persons, to give special attention to the missionary formation of children, convinced that children's education to a spirit of mission begins at a very tender age. Children, suitably guided by their family, school and parish, can become missionaries to their peers, and not only to them. With candid innocence and generous availability, they can attract their little friends to the faith and also foster among adults a longing for a faith more ardent and joyful. Their missionary formation needs to be nourished by prayer, the indispensable source of energy for growing in the knowledge of God as well as in ecclesial awareness; it must be sustained by generous sharing, also material sharing, in the difficulties facing less fortunate children. It is in this spirit that the collection of offerings on the occasion of Mission Sunday this year will be destined to bringing relief to those children of the world who live in subhuman conditions, seeking to restore to them the joyous possibility of growing up in the faith.

I am convinced that from the twofold commitment to evangelization and to human promotion, of which children must also be made aware, will surely blossom new vocations to the priesthood and the religious life, because, as I said in the above-mentioned Encyclical, *Redemptoris missio*, "faith is strengthened when it is given to others" (n. 2). Therefore the promotion of and concern for missionary vocations is still both urgent and necessary. This is because those to whom the Church must carry the message of salvation are an ever greater number, and that "preaching the Gospel requires preachers; the harvest needs labourers. The mission is carried out above all by men and women who are consecrated for life to their work of the Gospel and are prepared to go forth into the whole world to bring salvation" (ibid., n. 79).

May Christians compete with one another in generosity

4. On this special occasion I wish, once again, to express the entire Church's deep gratitude to missionaries, men and women, religious and lay. With dedication and enthusiasm, even at the cost of their lives, they work to evangelize and to serve all men and women. Their witness, often heroic, is a sign of total loyalty to Christ and his Gospel; it is an example, a symbol and a healthy challenge for Christians; it is an invitation to everyone to give, by living out their faith, full meaning to human existence.

Missionaries devote all their spiritual and physical energy to spreading the Gospel of hope. Through them, Christ, the Redeemer of the world, says again to all people: "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly". So it is right that on Mission Sunday Catholics should remember missionaries and demonstrate their affection and desire to collaborate, with concrete gestures of

solidarity. Great and urgent are the needs connected with evangelization and human promotion. I have seen this for myself during my missionary journeys to the different continents. There is need for spiritual support as well as concrete solidarity, consisting also in material aid. May the hearts and the hands of believers, especially those with greater economic possibilities, be open to contribute to the "Fund of solidarity" through which the Society for the Propagation of the Faith seeks to meet the needs of missionary activity. Among some of the most pressing needs are certainly funds for the building of churches and chapels where the faithful may gather for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist; for the formation and material support of candidates to the priesthood and also catechists; the publication in local languages of religious texts for education in the faith such as the Bible, national catechisms and liturgical books.

May Christian communities compete with one another in generosity, imitating the example of the early Christians, who were "of one heart and one soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common" (Acts 4:32). Through giving with joy they came to understand that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Through this sharing, may there spring up for the Church a source of renewed communion and prophetic charity.

5. A model of this love of God and love of others is Mary, the Mother of Christ and the Mother of believers. To her I entrust all those dedicated to carrying out the missionary mandate of her Son: the missionaries, that she may sustain their apostolic activity and their sacrifices; missionaries' collaborators and benefactors, that they may feel ever more inspired to share their spiritual and material goods with those who have none.

To each and everyone, I am happy to impart my Apostolic Blessing, with which, in this anniversary year of the Holy Childhood Society, I intend to embrace with special joy and affection the children, particularly those in unhappy conditions, those who are sick, poor or abandoned.

From the Vatican, the 18th day of June, the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in the year 1993, the 15th of my Pontificate.