



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE IN ST PETER'S BASILICA

Wednesday, 15 November 1978

Today, too, this Patriarchal Vatican Basilica is thronged with joyful young people, who offer my eyes and above all my heart a grand and exalting spectacle. I thank you, dear boys and girls, and dear young people from the schools, parishes and Catholic associations, for the joy and the comfort you give me with your numerous presence. It confirms how deeply you feel the religious-moral problem, as an answer to deep aspirations of the spirit. I wish to assure you that I follow your problems and your difficulties; I share your expectations; I wish to accompany you on your way. I have already repeated on various occasions: you young people are the hope of the Church and of society. This affirmation, however, so evident at first sight, requires, perhaps, a pause for reflection. In the first place: are adults, parents, educators, men responsible for the Church or for civil society, really convinced of the hope you represent? The reasons for anxiety derived from some expressions of life among youth today, might have weakened this confident certainty, the source of intelligent and intense activity, in view of your formation. And you, dear young people, do you really feel, deeply, that you are the hope and the joyful promise of tomorrow? Certainly, awareness of youthfulness is not sufficient to give the sense of that inner confidence, which alone makes it possible to look to the future with the calm certainty of being able to change the forces operating in the world, for the construction of a society really worthy of man. To be young means living within oneself an incessant newness of spirit, nourishing a continual quest for good, releasing an impulse to change always for the better, realizing a persevering determination of dedication. Who will make all this possible for us? Does man have within himself the strength to face with his own forces the snares of evil, selfishness and — let us say so clearly — the disintegrating snares of the "prince of this world", who is always active to give man, first, a false sense of his autonomy, and then to bring him, through failure, to the abyss of despair? All of us, the young and adults, must have recourse to Christ, the eternally young, Christ the conqueror of every expression of death, Christ who rose again for ever, Christ who communicates in the Holy Spirit the continuous, irrepressible life of the Father; we must do so in order to found and ensure the hope of tomorrow, which you will build, but which is already potentially present today. Christ Jesus must conquer; whenever his grace defeats in us the forces of evil, he renews our youth, widens the horizons of our hope, and strengthens the energies of our confidence. Christ's victory in our hearts calls for the exercise of the virtue of fortitude, the third cardinal virtue, which is the subject chosen for the General Audience today. This virtue, which enables us to face dangers and bear adversity—as St Thomas Aquinas states—permits man to fight courageously, to "agere contra" for the ideals of justice, honesty and peace, by which you feel deeply attracted. It is not possible to think of constructing a new world without being strong and courageous in overcoming the false ideas of fashion, the world's principles of violence,

the promptings of evil. All that requires us to go beyond the barriers of fear in order to bear witness to Christ and offer at the same time—the two realities are superimposed on each other—an image of the true man, who expresses himself only in love, in the gift of himself. I wish to point out to you, too, the example of fortitude of a young eighteen-year-old, St. Stanislaus Kostka, the patron saint of the young, who, to follow his vocation to the religious state, though of a frail constitution and sensitive nature, faced the opposition of his circle, fled from the pursuit of his relatives, and travelled on foot, secretly, from Vienna to Rome, in order to enter the novitiate of the Jesuits and thus answer the Lord's call. His tomb, in the church of S. Andrea al Quirinale, is the goal of pious visits of hosts of young people, especially during this month. You see, dear young people, to follow Christ, to build up the man in yourselves and to strive to help others to do so, entails courageous resolutions and the tenacious strength to put them into practice, sustaining one another also with forms of association, which make it possible to unite your efforts, deepen your convictions mutually, and encourage one another with reciprocal and loving help. Entrust yourselves to the grace of the Lord who cries within us and for us: courage! Victory over the world will be Christ's. Do you want to take his side and face with him this battle of love, animated by invincible hope and courageous fortitude? You will not be alone; the Pope is with you. He loves you and bless you.

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