



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO SIX THOUSAND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS
COMING FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD
TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS***

10 April 1979 Beloved Brothers and Sisters, Through the words of the President of your University Congress, you have sketched an effective summary of the purposes of these days you are spending in Rome, and you have spoken to me of the aspirations and ideals by which you are inflamed. I thank you sincerely for your expressions of affection for me and for my universal ministry as Peter's Successor. I know that you represent here as many as two hundred and seventeen Universities all over the world, and this is already a positive sign of the universality of Christian faith, even if it does not always have an easy life. I know very well, indeed, the anxieties of the University world, but I also know your youthful commitment in assuming personally the responsibility that Christ entrusts to you: to be his witnesses in circles in which, through study, science and culture are elaborated. In these days, you are reflecting on the efforts that are being made in the world for the purpose of developing unity and solidarity among peoples. You rightly ask yourselves on what values these efforts must be based, in order not to fall into the danger of the rhetoric of empty words. And you are asking yourselves, at the same time, in the name of what ideals it is possible to bring together cultures and peoples so different as, for example, those I see represented here by you. For this reason, it already comforts me to see in your eyes the desire to seek in Christ the revelation of what God says to man and how man must answer God. Here, beloved, is the central point: we must look to Christ, with all our attention. We know that God's plan is "to unite all things in him" (Eph 1:10), by means of the exceptional nature of his person and his salvific destiny of death and life. Just in these days, in which we are living again his blessed Passion, all this becomes more evident: Christ shows himself to us, in fact, with features that are even more similar to those of our weak nature as men. The Church points out to us Jesus raised on the cross, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Is 53:3); but also risen from the dead, "he always lives to make intercession for (us)" (Heb 7:25). Here, then, is the one at whom the Pope calls on you to look: Christ crucified for our sins and risen for our salvation (cf. Rom 4:25), who becomes a universal and irresistible point of convergence: "and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." (Jn 12:32). I know you place your hope in that cross, which has become for us all a "royal banner" (Liturgical hymn of Passiontide). Continue to be imbued, every day and in every circumstance, with the wisdom and strength which come to us only from Christ's paschal cross. Try to draw from this experience an ever new purifying energy. The cross is the pressure point to act as a lever for a service of man, so as to transmit to so many others the immense joy of being Christians. In these days, while I contemplate Christ raised and nailed to the Cross, there often comes into my mind the expression with which St Augustine comments on the passage in John's Gospel just mentioned: "The wood of the cross to which the limbs of the Dying One had been nailed, became the

chair of the Master who teaches" (*In Io.* 119:2). Just think: what voice, what master of thought can found unity among men and nations, if not he who, giving his own life, obtained *for all* of us adoption as children of the same Father? Precisely this divine filiation, obtained for us by Christ on the cross and realized by sending his Spirit into our hearts, is the only solid and indestructible foundation of the unity of a redeemed humanity. My sons and daughters, you have pointed out at your Congress the sufferings and the contradictions by which a society is seen to be overwhelmed when it moves away from God. The wisdom of Christ makes you capable of pushing on to discover the deepest source of evil existing in the world. And it also stimulates you to proclaim to all men, your companions in study today, and in work tomorrow, the truth you have learned from the Master's lips, that is, that evil comes "out of the heart of man" (Mk 7:21). So sociological analyses are not enough to bring justice and peace. The root of evil is within man. The remedy, therefore, also starts from the heart. And—I am happy to repeat—the door of our heart can be opened only by that great and definitive word of the love of Christ for us, which is his death on the Cross. It is here that the Lord wishes to lead us: within ourselves. All this time that precedes Easter is a constant call to conversion of the heart. This is real wisdom: *initium sapientiae timor Domini* (Sir 1:16). Beloved sons, have, therefore, the courage to repent; and have also the courage to draw God's grace from sacramental Confession. This will make you free! It will give you the strength that you need for the undertakings that are awaiting you, in society and in the Church, in the service of men. The true service of the Christian, in fact, is qualified on the basis of the active presence of God's grace in him and through him. Peace in the Christian's heart, moreover, is inseparably united with joy, which in Greek (*chará*) is etymologically akin to grace (*cháris*). The whole teaching of Jesus, including his Cross, has precisely this aim: "that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full" (Jn 15:11). When it pours from a Christian heart into other men, it brings forth hope, optimism, and impulses of generosity in everyday toil, infecting the whole of society. My sons, only if you have in you this divine grace, which is joy and peace, will you be able to construct something worth while for men. Consider your University vocation, therefore, in this magnificent Christian perspective. Study today, professional work tomorrow, become for you a way in which to find God and serve men your brothers; that is, they become a way of holiness, as beloved Cardinal Albino Luciani said pithily just before he was called to this See of Peter, with the name of John Paul I: "There, right in the very street, in the office, in the factory, one becomes holy, provided one carries out one's duty competently, for love of God and joyfully; in such a way that daily work will not become 'a daily tragedy', but almost 'a daily smile' (from *Il Gazzettino*, 25 July 1978). Finally, I recommend to the Blessed Virgin, *Sedes Sapientiae*, whom we find in these days *iuxta crucem Jesu* (Jn 19:25), to help you always to listen to this wisdom which will give you and the world the immense joy of living with Christ. And in whatever environment you find yourselves living and bearing witness to the Gospel, may my fatherly Apostolic Blessing always accompany you. © Copyright 1979 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana