



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE  
GATHERED IN THE VATICAN BASILICA**

*Wednesday, 21 February 1979*

*Beloved Boys and Girls,*

1. Every meeting is a new discovery, a source of real joy for me and for you. The Pope wants to know, to converse with, and to hear his little and young friends; but you, too, on your side, have a great desire to manifest to the Pope your joy, your enthusiasm and also

—why not?—your problems.

Now, you are particularly sensitive to the great problem of "freedom", of "liberation". But, we ask ourselves, you and I: "freedom" in what sense?; "liberation" from whom, from what, from what conditioning, from what slavery?

Today I refer once more to the third Conference of the Latin-American Episcopate, dedicated to evangelization in the present and in the future of the Church. To evangelize means doing everything, according to our capacities, in order that man "may believe", in order that man find himself again in Christ, in order that he may find again in him the full meaning and the adequate dimension of his own life. This "finding again" is, at the same time, the deepest source of man's liberation. "For freedom Christ has set us free", St Paul tells us (Gal 5:1). Liberation is certainly a reality of faith, a deep part of Christ's salvific mission, of his work, and his teaching.

2. Jesus himself links "liberation" with knowledge of the truth: "You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (Jn 8:32). In this affirmation is the deep meaning of the freedom that Christ gives us. Liberation is an interior transformation of man, as a consequence coming from knowledge of the truth. It is a question of a spiritual process of maturing, by means of which man becomes a representative and spokesman of "righteousness and holiness" (Eph 4:24) at the

different levels of personal, individual, and social life. But this truth is not mere truth of a scientific or historical nature, it is Christ himself

—the Word incarnate of the Father—who can say of himself, "I am the way, the truth, the life" (Jn 14:6). For this reason. Jesus, although aware of what was in store for him, repeatedly and forcefully, with firmness and with decision, opposed "non-truth" in his earthly life.

This service of truth, participation in the prophetic service of Christ, is a task of the Church, which tries to carry it out in the different historical contexts. It is necessary to call clearly by name injustice, the exploitation of man by man, the exploitation of man by the state, or by the mechanisms of systems and regimes. It is necessary to call by name all social injustice, all discrimination, all violence inflicted on man with regard to his body, his spirit, his conscience, his dignity as a person, his life.

Liberation, even in the social sense, begins with knowledge and courageous proclamation of the truth, without manipulations or falsifications of any kind.

3. You, too, young people and children, always be intensely united with Christ the Truth; be witness to the Truth, which is he himself and his message, entrusted to man who is frail and strong at the same time. Do you remember Pascal's enlightening meditation on man? "Man is only a reed, the weakest one in nature; but he is a thinking reed. It is not necessary for the whole universe to arm itself to crush him: steam, a drop of water are enough to kill him. But even if the universe crushed him, man would still be more noble than that which kills him, because he knows he will die and he knows the superiority the universe has over him; the universe knows nothing of this (B. Pascal, *Pensées*, 347.)

So this frail reed, just because it is "thinking", goes beyond itself; it bears within it the transcendental mystery and that "creative restlessness" which comes from it. Yet just in these times it is announced that the condition for the "liberation of man" is his liberation "from Christ", from his message, from his law of love, that is, from religion, which is defined as "alienation of man".

Beloved boys and girls! Christ is waiting for you to free you from evil, sin, and error, that is, from the real roots from which come the miseries that degrade and debase man. Always be prophets and witnesses to the Truth!

With my Apostolic Blessing.

Amen.

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