



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE BISHOPS FROM THE PRINCIPALITY OF WALES
ON THEIR «AD LIMINA» VISIT**

Friday, 19 November 1982

Dear Brothers in the Lord,

1. I welcome you today as brother Bishops who have come to Rome from the Principality of Wales. You have come here to renew your commitment to the Gospel, to profess your holy Catholic faith at the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul, and to offer anew to Jesus Christ the local Churches of which you are the zealous pastors. You come *bearing witness to centuries of Christian history*, culture and tradition, with which I was privileged to make personal contact during my recent visit to your country. And so your *ad Limina* visit this morning evokes in me the memory of my being among you, of celebrating the Eucharistic Sacrifice in your midst, of meeting your youth and the youth of England, and of greeting the esteemed group of fellow Christians who honoured me by their presence at Cardiff Castle. Yes, I recall the hours we spent together, servants of God's people, united in a pastoral and collegial ministry of service to our common flock. I am pleased to have this occasion to renew my greeting to all your people, and to him who bears the illustrious title, His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, whom I had the pleasure of meeting at Canterbury.

2. During my pastoral visit to Wales I was able to speak to the great assembly at Pontcanna Fields about the Eucharist. Then at Ninian Park, my last main discourse in Britain was on the value of prayer. And today, as a continuation of this theme, I would like to reflect with you briefly on *the importance of the word of God*, especially as it is recorded in the Sacred Scriptures. As I mentioned in Cardiff, the peoples of Wales have sought, from the earliest times, to express their love for Christ through "fidelity to the word of God".

3. The word of God, as handed down by the Church and recorded in Sacred Scripture, is indeed a

great treasure for the faithful; because of its supreme importance, the word of God deserves our very special attention. The Sacred Scriptures contain the revelation of God; they reveal his love for mankind; they reveal the redeeming Paschal Mystery of his Son Jesus Christ. Saint Paul explained to Timothy that the Sacred Writings have *an inner power* and that they “are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (*2 Tim.* 3, 16). The words of Jesus have a particular meaning for us and exert a special power over us. I mentioned to the young people at Cardiff that in praying they discover the secrets of God’s words: “Through prayer you come to experience the truth that Jesus taught: ‘the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life’ (*Io.* 6, 63)”. In prayer, all of us understand just how important the word of God truly is.

4. Besides the value of God’s word in itself, it also is *the perennial basis for all true ecumenism*. The cause of Christian unity is intimately bound up with the word of God in all the latter’s efficacy and with all its exigencies. The common acceptance of the Scriptures is a common acceptance of the God who reveals himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and of the apostolic Church of Christ that bears witness to this revelation and authenticates its written expression. The common acceptance of the Scriptures entails a common commitment to proclaiming the One about whom all the Scriptures speak: Jesus Christ the Son of God and Saviour of the world. The Sacred Scriptures supply, moreover, so many common formulas with which Christian brethren of many lands - and often Christian and Jewish brethren - offer praise to a common Father in heaven. The words of the Psalm continue to invite the sons and daughters of Wales to praise God in song and with their own national instrument: “Sing joyfully to the Lord, all you lands . . . Sing praise to the Lord with the harp, with the harp and melodious song” (*Ps.* 98, 4-5). The word of God unites fellow Christians in a common discipleship that never grows tired of being challenged to love Christ in the least of his brethren. It is the common word of God that requires all of us to build the structures of all society on the foundations of truth and justice, and of fraternal respect, esteem and love. It is the word of God that records the great challenge for all ecumenism: *the prayer of Christ* for the perfect unity of all his followers. In presenting us with this challenge, the word of God leads us by its power to work and pray with Christ for what he so ardently desires.

5. The word of God is, finally, *a whole programme for the Church today*. In the words of the Second Vatican Council: “The Church has always regarded, and regards, the divine Scriptures together with Sacred Tradition as the supreme rule of faith” (*Dei Verbum*, 21). The word of God gives meaning to all the Church’s activities; it is *the criterion for all her actions*, and for her whole programme of life.

Just as prayer leads us to the Sacred Scriptures, so *the Scriptures nourish prayer*. For this reason we can never cease recommending the Sacred Scriptures to our priests, seminarians and laity; they are at the core also of consecrated religious life. Worthy of special mention is the wonderful practice emphasized by my predecessor Pius XII in his renowned Encyclical “[Divino Afflante Spiritu](#)”: the daily reading of the Bible in Christian families.

The benefits of Bible meditation and study are incalculable. The Scriptures remain *the basis for our preaching*. It is the power of God's word proclaimed in the Holy Spirit that gives authority and eloquence to the sacred preacher and enables him to touch human hearts: "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword . . ." (*Hebr.* 4, 12).

In the Sacred Scriptures the Church has *contact with Christ*, about whom all the sacred authors wrote - the Christ who becomes for us our wisdom and righteousness, our sanctification and redemption (Cfr. *1 Cor.* 1, 30). Through the pages of the Sacred Writings and in their proclamation Jesus Christ lives with and for his people and communicates his life-giving message of salvation. *At the centre of all Scripture there is the person of Jesus Christ*, eternal Son of God, Incarnate Word of the Father and Son of the Virgin Mary. Through the Scriptures, Christ belongs to us, in the words of Saint Jerome: "To be ignorant of the Scriptures is not to know Christ" (S. HIERONYMI *In Isaiam*, Prolog.).

Venerable and dear Brothers, may all the clergy and people, of Wales, together with you their Bishops, find renewed joy and consolation for daily living, as well as fresh strength and hope for their ecclesial mission, in the service of God's holy word.

With deep faith and love let us all, with Peter, in the unity of Christ's Church, say to Jesus: "You have the words of eternal life" (*Io.* 6, 68). This is the *message of love, obedience and zeal for God's word* that I send to all the Church throughout Wales, with my Apostolic Blessing and with my love in Christ Jesus.

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