



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE BISHOPS OF SCOTLAND  
ON THEIR «AD LIMINA» VISIT**

*Tuesday, 30 November 1982*

*Dear Brothers in Christ*

1. There is no more appropriate time for us to assemble to celebrate our unity than on this feast of Saint Andrew, Apostle of Jesus Christ, brother of Simon Peter and Patron of Scotland. And as we celebrate the unity that is ours in Christ and in the Church, there also come to mind many memories of events that took place during my pastoral visit to your country; at the same time we look to Saint Andrew himself for a *fresh inspiration for our episcopal ministry*.

At the very centre of your *ad Limina* visit today is Jesus Christ, whom John the Baptist points out as the Lamb of God (Cfr. *Io.* 1, 29. 36), and to whom Andrew bears witness with that wonderful announcement made to his brother: “ We have found the Messiah ” (*Ibid.* 1, 41). *The encounter* that took place between Andrew and Peter *prefigures and summarizes vital stages of our own ministry*: Andrew finds Jesus? he leads Peter to Jesus, and then Jesus leads Peter - and with him all of us - to the Father. Andrew thus proclaims to the world the One who was awaited for centuries: “ We have found the Messiah ”.

2. Our own episcopal ministry also consists *in proclaiming Jesus Christ the Messiah* in the fullness of his identity as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world and as the Son of the Eternal Father. We are called to proclaim him to so many people who still await his coming into their hearts and into their lives. Like Andrew, we have, by God’s grace, discovered the Messiah and the meaning of his message, which is a message of hope to be transmitted to our people.

3. It is my hope that my pastoral visit will indeed prove to have been a new beginning in the ecclesial life of Scotland - a new beginning *especially for evangelization and ecumenism*. The Lord

himself is constantly inviting us to newness of life, in expectation of that final moment when he will definitively proclaim: "Behold, I make all things new" (*Apoc.* 21, 5).

Having been led to Christ and having found him, the Church in Scotland is called *to lead others to Christ*. In a very special way this task belongs to the Bishops: to proclaim Jesus Christ. To lead every category of people to Jesus Christ: the young and the old, the sick and the handicapped, families, schoolchildren, men and women religious, and the very priests who collaborate with them in the ministry of the Gospel. To each group the Bishop must offer Jesus Christ in all the relevance of his Gospel, which is "the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith" (*Rom.* 1, 16).

4. Realizing also how Christ's message is a "message of reconciliation" (*2 Cor.* 5, 20), and how we have been entrusted with a "ministry of reconciliation" (*Ibid.* 5, 18), we are moved to ask God to maintain for Scotland her new beginning in ecumenical relations. Jesus came, *breaking down*, through his own blood, *barriers of hostility* (Cfr. *Eph.* 2, 14). So too, our ministry of reconciliation must continue to reach out to all our Christian brethren. On my part I recall once again my meeting with the various Church leaders in your country, and in particular with the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, to whom I send once more my greetings of respect and love in Christ Jesus. As I mentioned in Edinburgh, despite the need still to resolve important doctrinal issues, our mutual love and our common will for unity can indeed be a sign of hope to a divided world.

As I stated on that same occasion, ours is a sincere desire "to follow the ways by which God is leading us to that full unity which he alone can give". I believe that the lofty Christian sentiments expressed by the Moderator of the General Assembly give evidence to the same sincere desire to foster the spirit of reconciliation and to have further dialogue, as he stated, "not just on subjects of disagreement but also on the joint themes on which we agree".

We beg God to let us understand ever more that *Christian unity is his gift*. It is to be sought in prayer, with the same earnestness with which Christ entreated his heavenly Father. At the same time, God is the sole dispenser of his gifts; he does not commit himself to human timetables. Hence the gift of perfect unity must be yearned for in love and penance, but it must be awaited with patience. The need for patience does not imply that we should not work and pray together; nor does it imply that God's word is not exigent in calling for concrete compliance. Rather, we know that no human effort is commensurate with those effects that can only be brought about by the sovereign action of the Holy Spirit.

5. In this feast of Saint Andrew, as I think back on the warmth and Christian love with which I was welcomed throughout Scotland, I am encouraged to renew the appeal I made *to all the Christians of your land*, asking again if we cannot make our pilgrim journey together, hand-in-hand, exerting united and harmonious efforts to apply the Gospel message to our lives, walking in Christian charity, while praying and working for that unity in faith which will enable us to celebrate together

the Eucharistic Supper of the Lord.

6. Dear brother Bishops, as I turn again, through you, to express my thoughts to the beloved people of Scotland, I also wish to proclaim to them that *our common desire for Christian unity* is not inordinate, but that it *corresponds to the will of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. It is neither unrealistic nor impossible because the Holy Spirit dwells in the hearts of the faithful and the divine action “at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think” (*Eph. 3, 20*).

7. The message, therefore, that I proclaim today is one of fresh hope in the infinite power of Christ’s Paschal Mystery, in which he sends his Holy Spirit into our hearts. To the young people of Scotland, who filled me with joy by their enthusiasm for the Gospel, and to all the faithful of every generation I offer *the great treasure of the Church*: Jesus Christ and his word, Jesus Christ and his promises, Jesus Christ and communion with his Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit.

This is the grace and the goal to which Scotland is called, and called anew: “So that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope” (*Rom. 15, 13*).

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