



# The Holy See

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APOSTOLIC VISIT TO CANADA

**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE MEMBERS OF DIFFERENT CHURCHES  
AND CHRISTIAN COMMUNIONS**

*Anglican Church of Saint Paul (Toronto)  
Friday, 14 September 1984*

*Dear Friends in Christ,*

1. I am deeply pleased to join in the prayer of praise and petition with all of you who represent the different Churches and Christian Communions throughout Canada. With deep respect and love I greet you all in the words of the Apostle Paul: "Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (*2 Thess. 1, 2*).

In the Gospel according to Saint Matthew we are told that Jesus "went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them" (*Matth. 5, 1-2*). We, too, are disciples of Jesus, and together we go to him. We go to listen to his word so that he may teach us as he once taught the crowd that gathered round him on the mountain. We wish to be instructed and inspired by his message of salvation. We also wish to pray together for the gift of unity among all Christians and to unite our hearts in praise of God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

2. It is very good to be with you. I want you to know how deeply grateful I am for the Ecumenical Pastoral Letter which was addressed to Christian congregations and parishes throughout Canada prior to my pastoral visit. It was heart-warming to be assured of the prayerful support and fraternal interest of so many Christian brothers and sisters. I deeply appreciate the warm welcome which you have extended to me, and I am very pleased that you have seized this opportunity to affirm the necessity of the ecumenical movement, to point out many of the important steps towards full

unity which have already been taken, and to encourage fresh initiatives and continued prayer for the achievement of that goal for which we so greatly long.

3. Exactly twenty years ago today, on September 14, 1964, my predecessor Paul VI addressed those taking part in the Second Vatican Council as they gathered to begin the Third General Session, which was to promulgate the Constitution on the Church and the Decree on Ecumenism. Towards the end of his address he spoke directly to the Observers from other Churches and ecclesial Communities, saying: "We wish to assure you once more of our aim and hope to be able one day to remove every obstacle, every misunderstanding, every suspicion that still prevents us from feeling fully 'of one heart and one soul' (*Act. 4, 22*) in Christ and in his Church . . . This is something of the greatest importance, having its roots in the mysterious counsels of God, and we shall strive, in humility and piety, to dispose ourselves to be worthy of so great a grace".

In the twenty years that have elapsed since these words were spoken, we can rejoice to see the great strides that have been made, for indeed many obstacles, misunderstandings and suspicions have been removed. For all of this we give thanks to God. At the same time, I am grateful for this occasion, and others such as this, which give us the opportunity to appreciate more fully what God's grace has wrought in our midst, and which give us renewed strength and courage for pursuing together the path which still lies ahead.

4. In my first Encyclical letter, "*Redemptor Hominis*", written shortly after my election to the See of Peter, I stated: "In the present historical situation of Christianity and the world, the only possibility we see of fulfilling the Church's universal mission with regard to ecumenical questions is that of seeking sincerely, perseveringly, humbly and also courageously the ways of drawing closer and of union. Pope Paul VI gave us his personal example for this. We must therefore seek unity without being discouraged at the difficulties that can appear or accumulate along that road; otherwise we would be unfaithful to the word of Christ, we would fail to accomplish his testament" (*Ioannis Pauli PP. II, Redemptor Hominis*, 6). The experience of the past six years since my election has confirmed even more in my heart the evangelical obligation "of seeking sincerely, perseveringly, humbly and also courageously the ways of drawing closer and of union".

5. We cannot turn back on this difficult but vital task, for it is essentially linked with our mission of proclaiming to all humanity the message of salvation. The restoration of the complete unity of Christians, for which we so greatly yearn and pray, is of crucial importance for the evangelization of the world. Millions of our contemporaries still do not know Christ, and millions more who have heard of Christ are hindered from accepting the Christian faith because of our tragic division. Indeed, the reason Jesus prayed that we might be one was precisely "so that the world might believe" (*Io. 17, 21*). The proclamation of the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ is greatly obstructed by doctrinal division among the followers of the Saviour. On the other hand, the work of evangelization bears fruit when Christians of different communions, though not yet fully one, collaborate as brothers and sisters in Christ, to the degree possible and with respect for their

particular traditions.

As the third millennium of Christianity approaches, we are faced with a rapidly expanding technology which raises numerous opportunities as well as obstacles to evangelization. While it engenders a number of beneficial effects for humanity, it has also ushered in a technological mentality which challenges Gospel value. The temptation exists of pursuing technological development for its own sake, as if it were an autonomous force with built-in imperatives for expansion, instead of seeing it as a resource to be placed at the service of the human family. A second temptation exists which would tie technological development to the logic of profit and constant economic expansion without due regard for the rights of workers or the needs of the poor and helpless. A third temptation is to link technological development to the pursuit or maintenance of power instead of using it as an instrument for freedom.

To avoid these dangers, all such developments need to be examined in terms of the objective demands of the moral order and in the light of the Gospel message. United in the name of Christ, we need to ask critical questions and assert basic moral principles which have a bearing on technological development. For instance, the needs of the poor must take priority over the desires of the rich; the rights of workers over the maximization of profits; the preservation of the environment over uncontrolled industrial expansion; production to meet social needs over production for military purposes. These challenges present us with important areas of ecumenical collaboration and form a vital part of our mission of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ. And before all of this we lift up our hearts to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I know that major efforts of ecumenical collaboration have been taking place in Canada for a number of years; in more recent years there have been an increasing intensity and a growing longing for complete union in Christ. The various theological dialogues between the Churches have been very significant, and several inter-church coalitions for social justice and human rights have proven to be particularly important in view of the special problems of our technological age. I deeply admire the Christian spirit which has produced these generous efforts. And I urge you to continue, despite incomplete results, and despite the unfair criticisms which you may at times encounter on the part of those who do not understand the importance of ecumenical activity. I willingly reiterate the position of the Catholic Church that all worthy efforts for promoting unity among Christians are a response to the will of God and the prayer of Christ. They are an essential part of our mission to live the truth in charity and to proclaim the Gospel of Christ.

6. La collaboration œcuménique, comme nous l'avons constaté, peut prendre bien des formes: travailler ensemble dans des programmes d'entraide, entreprendre le dialogue théologique et essayer en commun de comprendre notre passé tourmenté, coopérer dans l'action pour la justice et pour l'humanisation de la société technologique, et bien d'autres actions encore. Toutes ont une grande valeur et il faut les poursuivre avec ardeur, en particulier celles qui font avancer la vérité et nous aident à croître en charité fraternelle. En même temps, il faut que nous nous rappelions la

primauté des activités spirituelles que le second Concile du Vatican considérait comme l'âme même du mouvement œcuménique (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 8). Je pense à la pratique fidèle de la prière publique et privée pour la réconciliation et l'unité, et à la recherche de la conversion personnelle et de la sainteté de vie. Sans cela, tous les autres efforts manquent de profondeur et n'ont pas la vitalité de la foi. Nous aurions vite oublié aussi que saint Paul nous dit clairement: "Tout vient de Dieu, qui nous a réconciliés avec lui par le Christ et nous a confié le ministère de la réconciliation" (2 *Cor.* 5, 18).

Il ne peut y avoir parmi nous de progrès vers l'unité s'il n'y a pas d'approfondissement de la sainteté de la vie. Dans les Béatitudes, Jésus montre le chemin de la sainteté: "Heureux les pauvres de cœur . . . Heureux les doux . . . Heureux ceux qui pleurent . . . Heureux ceux qui ont faim et soif de la justice . . ." (*Matth.* 5, 3 ss.). Si nous cherchons à nous trouver parmi ceux qui sont déclarés "heureux", nous grandirons nous-mêmes en sainteté; mais en même temps nous apporterons notre contribution à l'unité de tous les disciples du Christ, et ainsi nous participerons à la réconciliation du monde. La vraie sainteté de la vie, qui nous rapproche du cœur du Sauveur, fortifiera nos liens de charité avec tous, et spécialement les autres chrétiens.

Let us, then, strive to be counted among these "blessed ones" of the beatitudes, "hungering and thirsting for righteousness" in a technological age, praying for unity with one another and with all who believe in Christ, yearning in hope for the day when "there will be only one flock and one shepherd" (*Io.* 10, 16).

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