



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO THE PILGRIMS FROM GREAT BRITAIN

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Monday, 23 November 1987*

*Your Eminence, Your Graces, My Brothers in the Episcopate,
Dear Friends,
Brothers and Sisters,*

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you, pilgrims and visitors from Great Britain, on the occasion of the Beatification of George Haydock and his eighty-four companion Martyrs. In a particular way I greet all the Bishops from England, Scotland and Wales who this year are making their *ad Limina* visit. This happy coincidence serves to manifest even more clearly the communion of faith and love which links your beloved land to the Apostolic See.

You come from every Diocese of England and Wales, and among you are members of the Martyrs' own families. There are likewise pilgrims from Scotland and Ireland. To all of you I express a cordial greeting. I extend a warm welcome also to the Anglican Bishop of Birmingham, the representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Anglican Communion.

Your presence here in Rome immediately brings to mind my visit to Britain in 1982, the first time a Bishop of Rome had set foot on British soil. I well remember the warmth of the welcome I received. The words I spoke in Westminster Cathedral on that occasion seem fitting for this happy day: "The roll of your saints and of your great men and women, your treasures of literature and music, your Cathedrals and Colleges, your rich heritage of parish life speak of a tradition of faith. And it is to the faith of your fathers—living still—that I wish to pay tribute" (Ioannis Pauli PP. II, *Homilia in Ecclesia Cathedrali Vestmonasteriensi*, 1, die 28 maii 1982: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, VI/2 [1982] 1895).

The glorious Catholic tradition of your countries has known many moments of splendour and vitality. Above all, there have been men and women in every age who have reflected admirably the figure of Christ. Your saintly monks and bishops, rulers and scholars, missionaries and martyrs, as well as the unknown multitudes of ordinary Christian people who have passed the faith on from generation to generation, all of these are an essential part of your history. The Christian tradition is at the very core of your heritage.

Today, that tradition of faith is being challenged in new ways, but just as intensely as in the age of the Martyrs. Christians are being called upon to bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ at a time when the human family, in the words of the Second Vatican Council, "nourishes higher hopes but also looks anxiously upon many contradictions which remain to be resolved" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 56).

It is my ardent hope, which I am sure you share with me, that the recognition being given to the Martyrs of England and Wales and Scotland will serve to draw attention to the importance of conscience and religious faith in our lives. The Martyrs placed their whole trust in Christ. In him they found the courage to put God above all, in life and in death; to love him above all else. This is their message for our time.

Our encounter with Christ in faith demands a conversion of our way of thinking, a new sensitivity and a new way of judging things. The Lord calls us to be renewed in our mind, "that (we) may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (*Rom. 12, 2*). This is the renewal in outlook that society needs. Just as the fidelity of the Martyrs challenged the consciences of their contemporaries, so our complete fidelity to the Gospel of grace and peace must challenge today's world. May the memory of your Saints and Martyrs sustain you in this.

I thank you for having taken part in the Beatification ceremony, for your devotion to these champions of our faith. I ask you to take my greetings to your families at home, especially the children, the old and the sick. Your country has for centuries been called "the Dowry of Mary": in this Marian Year let us together call on Mary that through her prayers, joined with the prayers of these Blessed Martyrs, we may all grow in holiness of life and fidelity to Christ our Lord and King.

May God bless you all.

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