



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA AND ASTURIAS
ON THE OCCASION OF FOURTH WORLD YOUTH DAY

YOUTH VIGIL

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Monte del Gozo
Saturday, 19 August 1989

"Pilgrims, what do you seek?"

1.1. Beloved young people, I greet you in the name of Our Lord *Jesus Christ*: "the *Way*, the *Truth* and the *Life*". I thank you, who have come from the cities of Spain, the various Latin American nations, as well as from so many countries throughout the world, for having accepted my invitation to make this pilgrimage together, this journey to the tomb of the Apostle James.

I now greet all the young people of Galicia, especially those from the Archdiocese of Santiago. You have the opportunity to offer shelter and hospitality to the pilgrims who come to your land, a land privileged to contain the goal of a journey which leads to happiness, to joy, to Christ.

At this point I wish to offer greetings in some of the languages represented here by the young pilgrims:

I greet you all, young Italian-speaking people. I hope that the pilgrimage serves to strengthen your journey of faith, and deepen your joy in following Christ in all the ways of your life.

I warmly greet the French-speaking young people, and I thank them for responding in such large

numbers to my invitation. Dear young people, you are welcome to this extraordinary meeting which I have greatly desired. May Christ's joy and peace be with you always.

My cordial greeting goes also to the many English-speaking pilgrims who are with us on this happy occasion. Dear young people, you have come to Santiago de Compostela, following in the footsteps of Christian pilgrims from many different times and places. Here, at the tomb of the Apostle James, may you be renewed in the Catholic faith, which comes to us from the apostles. In union with the entire Church, may you commit yourselves generously to follow Jesus Christ, who alone is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life".

My warm greetings go also to the young people from German-speaking lands. In the Gospel, Jesus invites you to follow his word and example. See the word of Jesus, not as an unreasonable demand, but rather as an encouragement to human and Christian maturity. Have the courage of self-giving in service. You will thus discover your authentic "being", which does not depend on "having", and you will be much the richer.

You also are welcome, young Portuguese-speaking people, who are widely represented here by the boys and girls from the neighbouring nation, Portugal. The Pope has already heard your longings! With deep affinity and affection I repeat a question already asked some time ago at Lisbon: are you aware of being "Christ's natural allies" in evangelization? May you bring from this meeting an even more lively and effective awareness that you are witnesses to Christ, our life, peace, and joy.

I cordially greet you, young Poles who have come from Poland and from Polish communities abroad to Santiago de Compostela for World Youth Day 1989, following the most ancient pilgrim route. It gives me deep joy that, in this place associated with the Apostle and Martyr St James, you wish to pray together with the Pope, and be confirmed in your vocation whose model is Christ himself, our Way, Truth, and Life.

I warmly greet the Flemish and Dutch young people. Through this pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, may they understand better that their life is an uninterrupted pilgrimage to their heavenly homeland, and that Jesus Christ is the Way to travel this journey.

I cordially greet all the Croatian young people. May Christ always be the Way, the Truth and the Life for you, your age group, and all your people.

I also warmly greet the young people from Slovenia. May Christ be, for you and all your contemporaries, the Way, the Truth and the Life. May my Apostolic Blessing accompany you everywhere.

Praised be Jesus Christ! I wish to greet all the young Japanese who have come from the Far East

to participate in the World Youth Day, in this meeting of youthful hopes. My wish for you is that, united to Christ, with the Blessed Virgin's help, together with all young people everywhere, you may be able to build a new world. Praised be Jesus Christ!

I greet all the boys and girls from Vietnam. To all of you who have come from so far away, I wish that, having understood the laity's mission in the Church, you may bear witness to it in the world in the name of Jesus; he is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

As well as you, who have gathered together here in great numbers, I have also countless young men and women from all over the world very much present in my mind, because they have united themselves spiritually to us, and have communicated their nearness and participation in this *Day*.

I also thank the Cardinals and bishops, priests, religious, and all the lay faithful who have accompanied you on this path of St James.

The way. This is the word that best expresses the character of this *World Meeting of Youth*.

You have set out from all the countries of Europe, from every continent. Some of you have come on foot, like the pilgrims of old; others by bicycle, by boat, by bus, by plane... You have come in order to discover here in Santiago the roots of our faith, to pledge yourselves generously to the "new evangelization", on the very eve of the third millennium.

Over the centuries, countless pilgrims have preceded us on the way to Santiago. At the beginning of the first act of this dramatic representation we have seen the pilgrims with the characteristic and traditional symbols of the "Jacobean Route": the hat, the staff, the shell and the gourd. When you return to your countries, to your houses and places of study, these symbols will help you recall tonight's meeting, and above all its significance.

For us, just as it did for those pilgrims who have preceded us in ages past, *this way expresses a deep spirit of conversion*. A desire to return to God. A way of purification and penance, of renewal and reconciliation.

Thus, for each one of us, as it did for the pilgrims who have gone before us, it is very important that it end with a meeting with the Lord, through the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. I know that many of you have received these sacraments during these past days. "Purification of heart and a conversion to the heavenly Father are — as the bishops of the dioceses of the "Jacobean Route" have written in their pastoral letter — the fundamental inspiration and objective of the Way to Santiago" (n. 57).

1.2. Let us reflect now on the meaning of the word "way", so that this conversion of heart and meeting with the Lord, which we are now experiencing, may give new meaning to our lives.

The word "way" is very closely related to the idea of "search". This aspect has been highlighted in the representation which we are seeing.

What do you seek, pilgrims? the crossroads have asked. This crossroads represents the question which man puts to himself regarding the meaning of life, regarding the goal he wants to reach, regarding the reason for his behaviour.

We have seen represented, in a very expressive manner, some of the things which frequently many people set up as the goal of their life and their activity: *money, success, egoism, comfort*. However, the young pilgrims in the play have seen that in the long term these do not satisfy man. These things are unable to fill the human heart.

1.3 *What do you seek, pilgrims?* Each one of us here must ask himself this question. But you above all, since you have your life ahead of you. I invite you to decide definitively the direction of your way.

With the very words of Christ, I ask you: *"What do you seek?" (Jn 1:38). Do you seek God?*

The spiritual tradition of Christianity not only underlines the importance of our search for God. It highlights something more important still: *it is God who looks for us*. He comes out to meet us.

Our way to Compostela means wanting to give an answer to our needs, to our questions, to our «search»; it also means going out to meet God who looks for us with a love so great that we can understand it only with difficulty.

1.4. This meeting with God is achieved in Jesus Christ. It is in him, who has given his life for us, in his humanity, that we experience the love which God has for us. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (*Jn 3:16*).

Just as Jesus called St James and the other apostles he also calls each one of us. Each one of us, here in Santiago, has to understand and believe: *"God is calling me, God is sending me"* From all eternity God has thought about us and has loved us as unique and unrepeatable persons. He calls us and his call comes to us through the person of Jesus Christ who says to us, as he said to the apostles: *"Come, follow me". He is the Way which leads to the Father!*

Yet we must recognize that we have neither sufficient strength, nor constancy, nor purity of heart to follow God with our whole life with our whole heart. Let us ask Mary, who was the first to follow the path of her Son, to intercede for us.

Jesus wants to accompany us as he accompanied the disciples on the way to Emmaus. He points

out to us the direction we have to follow. He gives us strength. On returning home, like the disciples of the Gospel story, we will be able to say that our hearts burned within us when he spoke to us on the way and that we recognized him in the breaking of the bread (cfr. *Lk 24:32, 35*). That will be the time to present ourselves to others, and above all to other young people, as witnesses. Yes! Witnesses of the love of God and of their hope of salvation.

Where is the Truth?

2.1. "We are seeking truth". The words of the last song must resound in our hearts, because they give the deepest meaning to St James's way: *seek truth and proclaim it*.

Where is truth? "What is truth?" (*Jn 18:38*). Before you, someone else had already asked Jesus this question.

During the stage performance, we were witnesses to the *three answers* that the world gives to these questions. *The first: use all one's fervour for the instant gratification of one's senses*, a constant search for the pleasures of life. To that the pilgrims replied: "We had fun, but... we keep on walking in a vacuum".

The second answer, that of the violent who are interested in having power and dominating others, was not accepted by pilgrims of the second scene either. This answer brings on not only the destruction of the dignity of another person — brother or sister — but also one's self-destruction. Certain experiences during this century, which are still going on today, demonstrate what the results are when one's goal is power and supremacy over others.

The third answer, given by drug addicts, is the search for the liberation and the fulfilment of a person by escaping from reality. It is the sad experience of many persons, amongst them many young people of your ages, who have taken this road or other similar ones. Instead of guiding them towards freedom, these roads lead them to slavery and even *self-destruction*.

2.2. I am sure that, like almost all young people of today, you are worried about *air and sea pollution*, and that the problem of ecology upsets you. You are shocked by the misuse made of the earth's products and *the progressive destruction of the environment*. And you are right. One must take a coordinated and responsible action before our planet suffers irreversible damage.

But, dear young people, there exists also *a pollution of ideas and morals* which can lead to the *destruction of man*. *The pollution is sin*, from which lies are born.

Truth and sin. We must admit that very often lies are presented to us with the features of truth. We must, therefore, use our judgement in recognizing truth, the Word that comes from God, and repulse the temptations which come from the "Father of lies". I wish to speak about the sin of

denying God, refusing the light. As it is written in the Gospel according to St John, "*the true light*" was in the world: the Word, "the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not" (cfr. *Jn* 1:9, 10).

2.3. "Therefore at the root of human sin is the lie which is a radical rejection of the truth contained in the Word of the Father, through whom is expressed the loving omnipotence of the Creator; the omnipotence and also the love 'of God the Father, Creator of heaven and earth' " (*Dominum et Vivificantem*, n. 33).

"*The truth contained in the Word of the Father*". That is what we mean when we identify Jesus Christ with truth. "*What is truth?*" he was asked by Pilate. Pilate's tragedy was that although truth was there before him, personified by Jesus Christ, he failed to recognize it.

Dear young people, this tragedy must not occur in our lives. Christ is the centre of Christian faith, the faith which the Church proclaims today, as she has always done, to all men and women: God became man. "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us" (*Jn* 1:14). The eyes of faith see in Jesus Christ man as he could be and as God wishes him to be. At the same time, Jesus reveals to us the love of the Father.

2.4. As I wrote in the *Message for this World Youth Day*, *truth is the deepest necessity of the human spirit*. Above all, you must have a thirst for the truth about God, about man, about life and the world.

However, *the Truth is Jesus Christ*. Love the truth! Live the truth! Bring the truth to the world! *Be witnesses to the truth!* Jesus is the truth that saves; he is the Truth to which the Spirit of Truth shall lead us (cfr. *Jn* 16: 13).

Dear young people: *let us look for the truth about Christ, about his Church*. However, let us be consistent: let us love the truth, live in the truth, proclaim the truth! O Christ, *teach us the truth*. Be for us *the only truth!*

What is the meaning of life?

3.1. Finally, dear young people, Christ is the Life. I am sure that each of you loves life, not death. You wish to live life to the full, animated by hope arising from a far-reaching plan.

It is right that you have a thirst for life, for a full life. You are young precisely for this. *However, in what does life consist?* What is *the meaning of life*, and what is the best way of realizing it? A short time ago you sang with enthusiasm: "*Somos peregrinos de la vida, caminantes unidos para amar*". Is not this the clue to the answer you are seeking?

The Christian faith places *a deep link between love and life*. In John's Gospel we read: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (*Jn 3:16*). God's love brings us to life, and this *love and life* are realized in *Jesus Christ*. He is the Incarnate Love of the Father; in him "the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared" (*Tit 3:4*).

Dear young people, Christ is therefore the one *competent interlocutor* to whom you can put the essential questions about the value and meaning of life, not only a healthy, happy life, but also a life *weighed down by suffering*, whether marked by some physical disability or by difficult family and social conditions. Yes, even for *tragic problems* which can be expressed more by groans than by words, Christ is the competent interlocutor. Ask him, listen to him!

The meaning of life. He will say to you: *keep loving*. Only the person who forgets self in order to give himself to others fulfils his own life and expresses to the greatest extent the value of his earthly existence. It is *the evangelic paradox* of the life which is redeemed by being lost (cfr. *Jn 12:25*), a paradox which finds its full explanation in the mystery of Christ who died and rose for us.

3.2. Dear young people, *the mature perspective of a human and Christian vocation is presented to us as part of the gift*. This is important above all in the case of a religious vocation, by which a man or a woman, through the profession of the evangelical counsels, takes on *for the sake of the Kingdom of God* the programme which Christ himself carried out on earth. Religious commit themselves to give a particular witness, placing the love of God above all other things, and remind everyone of the common call to union with God in eternity.

The world of today *needs these witnesses now as never before*, because very frequently it is so occupied with the things of this earth that it forgets those of heaven.

I want to recall here in a special way *400 young contemplative nuns* from Spain, who have indicated to me their wish to be present at this *Meeting*. I am certain that they are very united to all of us through their prayer in the silence of the cloister. Seven years ago, many of them attended the meeting which I had with young people in the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium in Madrid. Afterwards, responding generously to the call of Christ, they have followed him for life. Now they dedicate themselves to praying for the Church, but above all for you, young men and women, that you also may be able to respond with generosity to the call of Jesus.

With deep joy I also present to you, as a model of following Christ, the praiseworthy figure of the Servant of God Rafael Arnáis Barón, a Trappist Oblate who died at 27 years of age, in the Abbey of San Isidro de Dueñas (Palencia). It has been justly said of him that he lived and died "with a cheerful heart and with great love of God". He was a young person, like many of you, who welcomed the call of Christ and followed it with determination.

3.3. However, young people who are listening to me, Christ's call is not addressed only to the Brothers, Sisters and priests. He calls everyone; he also calls those who, upheld by love, *want to get married*. It is God, in fact, who created the human being *male and female*, thus introducing into history that singular duality thanks to which man and woman, although *essentially having equal rights*, have the characteristic of that *wonderful complementary* of attributes, which brings about mutual attraction. The love which blossoms when masculinity and femininity meet *embodies the call of God himself*, who created man "in his image and likeness", precisely as "man and woman". *Christ has made this call his own*, and enriched it with new values in the definitive Covenant established on the Cross. So, my dear friends, in the love of every baptized person, he asks to be able to express his love for the Church, for which he sacrificed himself so "that he might present the Church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (*Eph 5:27*).

Dear young people! to each one of you, as to that youth of your age referred to in the Gospel (cfr. *Mt 19:16-22*), Christ renews the call "Follow me!" Sometimes these words mean: "Follow me as I am the Spouse of the Church. Participate in the mystery, in that sacrament which the *Letter to the Ephesians* describes as "great": great in fact "in reference to Christ and the Church" (*Eph 5:32*).

Young people who are listening to me. Christ wishes to teach you the *wonderful wealth of nuptial love*. Let him speak to your hearts. Do not run away from him. He has something important to *tell you* for the future of your love. Above all with the grace of the sacrament, he has something decisive to *give you*, so that your love will have the necessary strength to overcome the trials of life.

Today, many voices around you speak a *language different from that of Christ*, proposing models of behaviour which, in the name of a "modernity" freed from "complexes" and "taboos" — as it is the custom to say — reduce love to a fleeting experience of personal satisfaction or even of mere sexual enjoyment. To those who are able to look at this type of relationship without prejudice, it is not difficult to distinguish behind the loud words the disappointing reality of egoistic behaviour, which aims principally at a personal advantage. *The other* is no longer accepted as a *subject* with his or her dignity, but is degraded to the level of an *object*, disposed of not according to the criteria of *values* but of interests.

Even *the child*, who should be the living fruit of the love of his parents, which incarnates, in a way transcends, and perpetuates itself in him, ends up by being considered *a thing* which one has the right to accept or reject according to one's state of mind.

How can one fail to notice the woodworm of a *consumer mentality* that has slowly emptied love of its exceptional content, in which is manifested the spark of the fire which burns in the heart of the Holy Trinity. One must bring love back to its eternal source if one wants it to give real gratification, joy, life.

To you young people falls the duty of being *witnesses in the world of today to the truth of love*. It is a demanding reality which often contrasts with current opinions and "slogans". But it is the only truth worthy of human beings called to form part of the family of God!

What does Jesus want of me?

4.1. You have come to this Monte del Gozo (Mount of Joy), full of hopeful anticipation and confidence, setting aside the snares of the world, truly to meet Jesus, "the Way, the Truth and the Life", who has invited each one of you *to follow him lovingly*. This is a universal call, which does not take the colour of one's skin into account, nor one's social condition or age. On this night, so moving for its religious significance, fraternity and youthful joy, *Christ, as Friend, is in the midst of the Assembly to ask you personally* if you want to follow decidedly the way which he is showing you, if you are prepared to accept his truth, his message of salvation, if you want to live the Christian ideal *fully*.

It is a decision which you must take without fear. God will help you; he will give you his light and his strength so that you may respond generously to his call, a call to a *total* Christian life.

Respond to the call of Jesus Christ and follow him!

4.2. But, more than one of you is asking himself or herself: What does Jesus want of me? To what is he calling me? What is the meaning of his call for me?

For the great majority of you, human love will present itself as a way of self-realization in the formation of a family. This is why, *in the name of Christ* I want to ask you:

Are you prepared to *follow the call of Christ through the Sacrament of Marriage*, so as to be procreators of new life, people who will form new pilgrims to the heavenly city?

In the history of salvation, Christian marriage is a *mystery of faith*. The family is a *mystery of love*, because it collaborates directly in the creative work of God. Beloved young people, a large sector of society does not accept Christ's teachings, and, consequently, it takes other roads: hedonism, divorce, abortion, birth control and contraceptive methods. These ways of understanding life are in clear contrast to the Law of God and the teachings of the Church. To follow Christ faithfully means *putting* the Gospel message *into practice*, and this also implies chastity, the defence of life, and also the indissolubility of the *matrimonial bond, which is not a mere contract* which can be arbitrarily broken.

Living in the "permissiveness" of the modern world, which denies or minimizes the authenticity of Christian principles, it is *easy and attractive to breathe in this contaminated mentality* and give in to the passing desire. But, bear in mind that those who act in this way *neither follow Christ nor love*

him. To love means to walk together in the same direction towards *God*, who is the *Source of Love*. In this Christian framework, *love is stronger than death* because it prepares us to welcome life, to protect it and defend it from the mother's womb until death. Therefore I ask you again:

Are you prepared to protect human life with the maximum care at every moment, even in the most difficult ones? Are you prepared, as young Christians, *to live and defend love through indissoluble marriage*, to protect the stability of the family, a stability which favours the balanced upbringing of children, under the protection of a paternal and maternal love, which complement each another?

This is the Christian witness that is expected of the majority of you, young men and women. To be a Christian means to be a witness to Christian truth, and today, particularly, it is to put into practice the authentic meaning which Christ and the Church give to life and to the full realization of young men and women through marriage and the family.

4.3. Yes, my dear young people, Christ is not only calling you to walk with him on this pilgrimage of life. He is sending you out in his place to be messengers of truth, to be his witnesses in the world, and, in practice, before other young people like yourselves, because today, all over the world, many of them are in search of the way, the truth and the life, but they do not know where to find them.

"The hour has come for a re-evangelization" (*Christifideles Laici*, 34), and you cannot be found wanting in this urgent call. In this place dedicated to St James, the first of the apostles to give testimony to his faith through martyrdom, let us pledge ourselves to accept the command of Christ: "you shall be my witnesses... and to the end of the earth" (*Acts* 1:8).

What does it mean to give witness to Christ? It simply means to live in accordance with the Gospel: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind... You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (*Mt* 22:37, 39).

The Christian is called to serve his neighbour and society, to promote and support the dignity of every human being, to respect, defend and favour the right of the person, to be a builder of a lasting and authentic peace based on fraternity, freedom, justice and truth.

Despite the marvellous possibilities which modern technology offers man, there is still a great deal of poverty and misery in the world. In many parts of the world people live menaced by violence, by terrorism and even by war. Our thoughts turn, once again, towards Lebanon and the other countries of the Middle East, and also to all peoples and nations where there is war and violence.

It is urgently necessary to be able to count on envoys of Christ, on Christian messengers. And you, young people, young men and young women, in the future you will be these envoys or messengers.

4.4. Christ's call leads along a way which is not easy to travel, because it can also lead us to the Cross. But there is no other way which leads to truth and which can give life. Nevertheless, we are not alone on this path. Mary, through her *Fiat*, opened a new way for humanity. By her acceptance of, and total dedication to the mission of her Son, she is the prototype of every Christian vocation. She will walk with us, she will be our travelling companion, and with her help we will be capable of following the vocation which Christ offers us.

Dear young people, let us set out upon our way with Mary; let us commit ourselves to following Christ, the Way, Truth and Life. Thus we will be zealous bearers of the message of the new evangelization and generous builders of the civilization of love.

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