



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO JAMAICA, MEXICO AND DENVER (COLORADO)
ON THE OCCASION OF THE EIGHTH WORLD YOUTH DAY
(AUGUST 8-16, 1993)

WELCOME CEREMONY IN DENVER

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II

International Airport of Denver
Thursday, 12 August 1993

Mr President,
Dear Friends,
Dear People of America,
Dear Young People,

1. I greatly appreciate your generous words of welcome. The *World Youth Day* being celebrated this year in Denver gives me the opportunity to meet you, and through you to express once again to the American people my sentiments of deep esteem and friendship. I thank you and Mrs. Clinton for your kind gesture in coming here personally to welcome me, coming together with your daughter.

I take this opportunity to greet the other representatives of the Federal Government, of the State of Colorado and of the City of Denver who are present here, and to thank all those who have contributed in any way to preparing this visit. I am grateful to the Bishops of the United States for their part in organizing the "*Eighth World Youth Day*" and in particular to Archbishop Stafford of Denver and the Catholic Church in Colorado for serving as the local hosts for this important international event.

I am aware that the United States is suffering greatly from the recent flooding in the Midwest. I have felt close to the American people in their tragedy and have prayed for the victims. I invoke Almighty God's strength and comfort upon all who have been affected by this calamity.

2. There is a special joy in coming to America for the celebration of this "*World Youth Day*". A Nation which is itself still young according to historical standards is hosting *young people gathered from all over the world* for a serious reflection on the theme of life: *the human life* which is God's marvellous gift to each one of us, and *the transcendent Life* which Jesus Christ our Savior offers to those who believe in his name.

I come to Denver to listen to the young people gathered here, to experience their *inexhaustible quest for life*. Each successive "World Youth Day" has been a confirmation of young people's openness to the meaning of life as a gift received, a gift to which they are eager to respond by striving for a better world for themselves and their fellow human beings. I believe that we would correctly interpret their deepest aspirations by saying that what they ask is that society – especially the leaders of nations and all who control the destinies of peoples – accept them as *true partners* in the construction of a more humane, more just, more compassionate world. They ask to be able to contribute their specific ideas and energies to this task.

3. The well-being of the world's children and young people must be of immense concern to all who have public responsibilities. In my pastoral visits to the Church in every part of the world I have been deeply moved by *the almost universal conditions of difficulty in which young people grow up, and live*. Too many sufferings are visited upon them by natural calamities, famines, epidemics, by economic and political crises, by the atrocities of wars. And where material conditions are at least adequate, other obstacles arise, not the least of which is the breakdown of family values and stability.

In developed countries, a serious moral crisis is already affecting the lives of many young people, leaving them adrift, often without hope, and conditioned to look only for instant gratification. Yet everywhere there are young men and women deeply concerned about the world around them, ready to give the best of themselves in service to others and particularly sensitive to life's transcendent meaning.

But how do we help them? Only by instilling *a high moral vision* can a society ensure that its young people are given the possibility to mature as free and intelligent human beings, endowed with a robust sense of responsibility to the common good, capable of working with others to create a community and a nation with a strong moral fiber. *America was built on such a vision*, and the American people possess the intelligence and will to meet the challenge of rededicating themselves with renewed vigor to fostering the truths on which this country was founded and by which it grew. Those truths are enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, and they still today receive a broad consensus among Americans. Those truths

sustain values which have led people all over the world to look to America with hope and respect.

4. To all Americans, without exception, I present this invitation: *Let us pause and reason together.*

To educate without *a value system based on truth* is to abandon young people to moral confusion, personal insecurity and easy manipulation. No country, not even the most powerful, can endure if it deprives its own children of this essential good.

Respect for the dignity and worth of every person, integrity and responsibility, as well as understanding, compassion and solidarity towards others, survive only if they are passed on in families, in schools and through the communications media.

America has a strong tradition of respect for the individual, for human dignity and human rights. I gladly acknowledged this during my previous visit to the United States in 1987, and I would like to repeat today the hope I expressed on that occasion: "America, you are beautiful and blessed in so many ways... But your best beauty and your richest blessing is found in the human person: in each man, woman and child, in every immigrant, in every native born son and daughter... The ultimate test of your greatness is the way you treat every human being, but especially the weakest and most defenceless ones.

The best traditions of your land presume respect for those who cannot defend themselves. If you want equal justice for all, and true freedom and lasting peace, then, America, defend life! All the great causes that are yours today will have meaning only to the extent that you guarantee the right to life and protect the human person".

5. Mr. President, my reference to the moral truths which sustain the life of the nation is not without relevance to the privileged position which the United States holds in the international community. In the face of tensions and conflicts that too many peoples have endured for so long – I am thinking in particular of the Middle East region and some African countries – and in the new situation emerging from the events of 1989 – especially in view of the tragic conflicts now going on in the Balkans and in the Caucasus – the international community ought to establish more effective structures for maintaining and promoting justice and peace. This implies that *a concept of strategic interest should evolve which is based on the full development of peoples* – out of poverty and towards a more dignified existence, out of injustice and exploitation towards fuller respect for the human person and the defence of universal human rights. If the United Nations and other international agencies *through the wise and honest cooperation of their member Nations*, succeed in effectively defending stricken populations whether victims of underdevelopment or conflicts or the massive violation of human rights, then there is indeed hope for the future. *For peace is the work of justice.*

6. The bounty and providence of God have laid an enormous responsibility on the people and Government of the United States. But that burden is also the opportunity for true greatness.

Together with millions of people around the globe I share the profound hope that in the present international situation the United States will spare no effort in advancing authentic freedom and in fostering human rights and solidarity.

May God guide this nation and keep alive in it – for endless generations to come – the flame of liberty and justice for all.

May God bless you all! God bless America!

America I express my gratitude for receiving me with rain.