



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
at the end of the Spiritual Exercises***

Saturday, 22 February 1997

Your Eminences,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and the Priesthood,

I join you in thanking the Lord for these Spiritual Exercises, which were an extended experience of intimacy with the Holy Spirit: he speaks to our hearts in silence.

They were God's precious gift at the beginning of the Lenten season. Just as Jesus spent 40 days in the desert in solitude and fasting, so we too went a little further "into the desert", to meditate on the ultimate meaning of life and to renew with filial readiness our "Amen" to the Father together with Christ, "the faithful and true witness" (Rv 3:14).

I thank dear Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, who has guided us on this journey with profound doctrine and spiritual inspiration, offering us his rich pastoral experience and also many literary suggestions taken from contemporary authors. He has helped us hasten our step on the way to the Great Jubilee. I chose him as the preacher precisely because he is President of the Committee established to prepare that historical event. 1997 is the first stage of the three-year period of immediate preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. It is the year dedicated to Jesus Christ, and Cardinal Etchegaray focused his meditations very appropriately on Christ, taking as his leitmotiv Pascal's words: "Apart from Jesus we do not know who God is nor who we are".

This week of spiritual retreat has also been a true grace for the Roman Curia. In these days it has drawn even closer around us recollected in these Exercises, and has renewed in the Holy Spirit its own awareness of being not only a community of ecclesial service, but above all, a community of faith and prayer, animated by generous and faithful love for Christ and the Church.

We have now reached the end of this extraordinary experience of the Spirit, and we naturally turn to Our Lady, evoked and invoked so many times during these days. We commend our resolutions and the fruits of these Exercises to her, “Causa nostrae laetitiae”.

Dear brothers and sisters, guided by Mary, Mother of the Church, let us now come down from the “mountain”, where we were attracted by Christ’s ineffable beauty. Let us descend to everyday life and continue on our way, bearing within us the light and joy we have drawn from the inexhaustible source of truth, which is Christ.

I cordially impart my Blessing to you all.

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