



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE SECOND MEETING
OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE FOR THE GREAT JUBILEE**

Thursday, 12 February 1998

Your Eminences,

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,

*Dear Priests and Lay Faithful,*1. I am pleased to welcome you at the conclusion of the second meeting of the Central Committee with the delegates for the Jubilee, gathered here on behalf of their respective Episcopates. I first of all greet Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, President of the Central Committee, the Cardinals on the Executive Council, Archbishop Crescenzo Sepe, the new General Secretary, the members of the Central Committee and the delegates of the Episcopal Conferences. I extend a special welcome to the fraternal delegates of the non-Catholic Churches and Communities. To you all I express my appreciation for your active participation! Your meeting is particularly important for the opportunity it offers to focus on pastoral plans for the Jubilee celebration, to outline the calendar for them and to prepare a concrete plan for welcoming pilgrims. I wish to congratulate you as you offer your valuable, enlightening contribution to making the celebrations of the jubilee year more meaningful and productive2. The journey towards that historic deadline is advancing more quickly, because the moment for opening the Holy Door, which will begin a year of grace and reconciliation for the whole Church, is drawing closer. Therefore, the effort being made for the outward organization is praiseworthy; but it must be accompanied by an interior preparation which prepares the heart to receive the Lord's gifts. First of all, we must rediscover a sense of God and acknowledge his lordship over creation and history. This will lead to a review to which each one must, with sincere conviction and love, submit his thoughts and choices, in his desire to seek the fullness of supernatural charity.3. The commemoration of the millennium of Christ's birth brings us to the centre of the mystery of Redemption: "Apparuit gratia Dei et Salvatoris nostri, Iesu Christi" (Ti 2:13). It is God who calls all people, none excluded, to share in the fruits of the work of salvation, which is achieved and spread across the earth through the mysterious action of the Holy Spirit. The Great Jubilee invites us to live again this moment of grace, while being aware that the gift of salvation must be accompanied by conversion of heart, through which one is reconciled with the Father and returns to the communion of his love. This conversion however would not be authentic if it did not also lead to reconciliation with one's brothers and sisters, who are children of the same Father. This is the social dimension of the restored friendship with God: it includes the members of one's own family; it extends to the workplace; it permeates the whole civil community. While welcoming us with his pardon, the Lord entrusts us with the mission of being the a leaven of peace and

unity all around us.⁴ The rediscovery of this wealth of grace, which is offered to us in Christ, and his welcoming us into his own life require a suitable journey of spiritual preparation: we are trying to carry it out in these years, and you are well aware of the programme for this which I suggested to the whole Church. I wished to invite every Christian first of all to revive his faith in the mystery of the Triune God and to deepen his knowledge of the mystery of Christ the Saviour. Only in this way will the People of God on their earthly pilgrimage be able to rediscover and revive their enthusiasm for the faith; every Christian will be able to savour the experience of meeting Christ, Teacher and Shepherd, Priest and Guide of every conscience. This will prepare the faithful to receive the gift of a renewed Pentecost, in order to enter the third millennium enlivened by a more fervent desire to rediscover the ever timely truth that God the Father, through his Son made man, not only speaks to man, but seeks him and loves him.⁵ The task entrusted to you is important. Your countries are already in expectation. Curiosity and hope are raised; there is especially a desire for authentic inner peace, enlightened by the truth of the Gospel. Thus everyone must hear the words of hope: "Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28). You must therefore be the assiduous promoters of initiatives that will transmit the message of the Great Jubilee to the people of your countries, be they Christian or not. See that pastoral plans are known and carried out, plans that refer to the sacraments, to the Word of God, to liturgical life, to prayer, to the fundamental theme of ecumenical dialogue, to meetings with non-Christians. See that information circulates, communicate news, keep alive the dialogue with your communities, bearing in mind the expectations of every community. See that the transition to the third millennium is a moment of renewal and grace for all.⁶ As everyone knows, the Jubilee of the Year 2000 differs from the other Jubilees because it will be celebrated simultaneously in Rome, the Holy Land and the individual local Churches. The celebration of every Jubilee also implies the idea of 'pilgrimage', a very ancient religious expression and one that is found in almost all peoples and religions with a primarily penitential purpose. Pilgrimages reflect the final destiny of man. Christians know that the earth is not their final dwelling place, because they are journeying towards a goal that is their true homeland. For this reason, the pilgrimage to Rome, the Holy Land and the sacred places chosen in the Dioceses emphasizes how all our life is a journey to God. For a pilgrimage to bear fruit it must provide intense moments of prayer, significant acts of penance and conversion and works of fraternal charity that can be understood as living proof of the love of God. In this spirit, the Jubilee will be an occasion for increasing the expressions of charity in every particular Church, in every association, in every ecclesial group. The concrete sign of love will show that authentic progress has been made in the longed-for renewal, heralding peace and universal brotherhood. Yours is the task of intelligently giving life to appropriate initiatives for this purpose. The Church of Rome's task is welcoming you with open arms, with a great heart, with active and generous friendship. The See of Peter, which "presides over the communion of charity", wishes to be present and active in this contest of solidarity involving all the Churches throughout the world. Today we must bear witness with special sensitivity for justice and the promotion of social development. We are all convinced that it is necessary to seek and possible to find ways for overcoming tensions other than through the logic of conflict and that we can make plans for resolving the difficult economic situation with which many States struggle, freeing entire populations from conditions of slavery and inhuman misery.⁷ The Jubilee is a providential ecclesial event. However, it is not an end in itself but a means - in the solemn celebration commemorating the Incarnation of the Son of God, our salvation - to spur Christians to conversion and interior renewal. Strengthened in faith they will be able to proclaim the Gospel message with renewed enthusiasm, showing that its acceptance is the way to build a world that is more human because it is more Christian. I entrust your zealous service of preparation for this great ecclesial event to the Blessed Virgin, with the wish that it may bear abundant fruit for the benefit of the Church and the whole world. I must tell you that the Jubilee is arousing great interest, not only among the Bishops of the whole world, but also among politicians. The date of 2000 creates an attitude of openness. We can say that it is the Christian memory

of the peoples and of the world that is open and manifested. I would like to end this meeting by reciting the Angelus with you, because this is the prayer of the Incarnation. With affection and gratitude I impart to you my Apostolic Blessing. ©

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