



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO VARIOUS PILGRIM GROUPS

Saturday, 9 December 2000

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

1. I welcome you with great joy today, the day after the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, and I thank you for your kind visit. You have come to cross the threshold of the Holy Door and to celebrate your Jubilee. I extend my cordial greeting to each one of you, pleased to share with you the joy of meeting the Lord.

I am thinking first of all of the many pilgrims from the various parishes of Italy. In particular, I greet the faithful from *Grumo Nevano*. Dear friends, in modern society, marked by rapid and deep social and cultural changes, may it be your constant care to update your religious formation by studying in depth the contents of the faith. Grow also in knowledge of and communion with the Lord, in an intense personal relationship with him, formed of listening to his word and of authentic prayer. You will thus be ready to respond unhesitatingly to those who call you to account for the reason you follow Christ, the Redeemer of every human person and of the whole person.

2. I am now thinking affectionately of you, dear *Members of the Radio Taxi 3570 Cooperative* of Rome and all those who have joined you from the various nations of Europe to celebrate a special Jubilee of taxi-drivers and road haulage contractors. You have come with your families. Thank you for your presence, thank you for the significant gifts that you bring. You perform an important service to the community and spend many hours of your day in the vehicles you drive.

Your work brings you into constant contact with people; you thus know the various facets of society, since you are often taken into your passengers' confidence. Always be ready to listen with courtesy and patience, doing your best to transmit serenity to everyone you meet. You can carry out a precious service of evangelization if you are able to communicate to your interlocutors the joy of your faith and of your Christian commitment to those who approach you. For this to happen, never neglect to deepen your own knowledge of Christ and of his Gospel. Try to recognize in every person you meet a brother to love and serve.

3. I now address a word to the *Federation of the Christian Agencies for International Volunteer Service*. Dear friends, at the end of your annual general assembly, you have wished to bring me your respectful greeting. I thank you for your

presence and for your cordial gesture.

Your worthy activity in favour of developing countries derives from a profound desire to put into practice the Gospel of love. In this context, your work qualifies as a special lay vocation in the service not only of the Christian proclamation, but also of the dignity of every person and the development of the world's peoples. While I express the Church's gratitude for your generous availability, I encourage the members of the 52 agencies that form your federation to continue enthusiastically initiatives to spread awareness of the goals that you have set yourselves and to persevere with an evangelical spirit in your activity for the benefit of so many needy brothers and sisters. I accompany my wishes with the assurance of special remembrance in prayer.

4. I then greet *the Members of the Christian Union of Executive Entrepreneurs*, who have gathered in Rome for the celebration of their Jubilee. Dear friends, may your worthy association's aim be to promote the knowledge, implementation and dissemination of the Church's social doctrine, thereby contributing to building a more just and fraternal society through the Christian and professional formation of its members and cooperation between them. In response to the Jubilee appeal for conversion, justice, and charity, you wanted to offer the Diocese of Rome the new parish complex of *Holy Mary of the Presentation* in Rome's Boccea district. Thank you for this noble act of positive cooperation in the evangelizing mission of the Bishop of Rome, which seals your sodality's long and praiseworthy commitment in the business world and in Italian society.

May the Jubilee event be a renewed experience of faith and grace and renew the motivation of each member of your union, to make common enterprises more and more capable of promoting a just well-being, fruit of the joint search for economic objectives, moral values and supportive attention to the needs of young people and the poor.

5. I extend a cordial greeting to the notaries who have come on pilgrimage to the Eternal City from 17 different countries of Europe. I am delighted that you wanted to meet the Successor of Peter during your pilgrimage, and I thank the President of the Austrian Notaries Association for this spiritual initiative in the Holy Year.

Your work is a service to citizens, so that the right balance will be maintained in their relations with one another. May this pilgrimage help you to fulfil this noble task for human well-being.

For this I gladly give you my Apostolic Blessing.

I extend my cordial greetings to all of you, notaries from various European countries who have come on pilgrimage to the Eternal City. I also greet the pilgrims from the Apostolic Region of Provence-Mediterranean, who have come from France to celebrate the Jubilee. May the Advent season be for you and for all disciples of Christ an opportunity to celebrate the Lord's Incarnation more intensely, by keeping your eyes fixed on the mystery of salvation. I wholeheartedly grant you all my Apostolic Blessing!

6. I joyfully greet the community of the Major Seminary of Tarnów: the teachers, professors and students. You have come to the Eternal City with your Pastor, Bishop Wiktor Skworc, as pilgrims of the Jubilee Year, to renew yourselves spiritually and to obtain the graces that derive from this Jubilee.

Rome is particularly marked by St Peter's presence. Peter is here! These words have been spoken in this city since the day of the death by martyrdom of the one who, through Christ's will, became the rock. In the district of Caesarea Philippi, Simon, son of Jona, called Peter by the Lord, made that profession of faith on which, as on a rock, the Church is built: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (*Mt* 16: 16). It is precisely on Peter's faith, strong as a rock, that the faith of the Church, and therefore our faith, is founded. He was the first, together with his brother Andrew, to be called to the service of fishers of men (cf. *Mk* 1: 16-18). It was he who confessed three times, in such simple and at the same time touching language, his love for the Risen Jesus before he was entrusted with power over the whole Church: "Feed my lambs" (cf. *Jn* 21: 15-19).

7. Dear students, Christ present in the Church, the one Redeemer of man, calls us to follow him today, as he once called Peter and the other Apostles. The scene of the calling of Andrew and of his brother, Simon Peter, is in a certain way constantly repeated in the history of man. Every one of you has heard in the depths of his heart Christ's words: "Come, follow me" (cf. *Mt* 19: 21) and carries this call in his heart, lives by it and is daily strengthened by it.

Every Christian vocation comes from God and is a gift of God. But the priestly vocation is a special gift of grace, the gift of the incomparable love of God for man. St John expressed this truth very profoundly with the words: "You did not choose me, but I chose you" (*Jn* 15: 16). In response to this gift we should show God constant gratitude and the willingness to give ourselves unreservedly to the cause of proclaiming the Gospel. May the awareness that you have been especially chosen prompt you to be concerned with your sanctification. The priesthood for which you are preparing should be a special journey for you towards holiness, towards a life of deep interior union with Jesus Christ, because only "whoever abides in him, bears much fruit" (cf. *Jn* 15: 5). As I wrote in the Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis*, "Holiness is intimacy with God; it is the imitation of Christ, who was poor, chaste and humble; it is unreserved love for souls and a giving of oneself on their behalf and for their true good; it is love for the Church which is holy and wants us to be holy, because this is the mission that Christ entrusted to her. Each one of you should also be holy in order to help your brothers and sisters to pursue their vocation to holiness" (n. 33).

8. You have come on pilgrimage to the Eternal City to entrust yourselves to Christ at the tomb of the Apostle Peter; your whole future is in a certain sense founded on the rock of his faith and love. Strengthened within and filled with grace, you will be able to respond to the gift of your priestly vocation with even greater fervour and generosity. Both in our homeland and beyond its frontiers, people are waiting for your ministry of the word and of the sacraments, for your guidance on the journey towards the Father's house. The Diocese of Tarnów enjoys a great number of priests and priestly vocations. Tarnów Seminary is an exceptional seminary from the standpoint of the number of candidates preparing for the priesthood there. This is a great grace for which we should fervently thank the Lord of the harvest; but it is also a task for your Diocese that it fulfils very well. For 25 years, priests from the Diocese of Tarnów have been proclaiming the Good News on the African continent. Missionary zeal has brought them to the countries of South Africa, to Belarus, to Ukraine and to Kazakhstan. May their example be an encouragement for you to undertake this great mission of proclaiming Christ to all peoples.

9. Dear students, I hope that you will be faithful to your vocation until the end of your lives. May your hearts always be filled with joy and youthful enthusiasm. Make good use of your time, growing, "in wisdom and grace before God and men" (cf. *Lk* 2: 52), after Christ's example.

Perseveringly build the seminary community on the foundations of brotherhood, prayer, meditation on the word of God and on the Eucharist. The world needs you. It needs your holiness and your authentic Christian witness. Bring the Gospel to the people of our time, who are more willing to listen to witnesses than to teachers, and are more sensitive to a living example than to words. I commend to God in prayer each and every one of you here present, as well as your parents, educators and professors. I entrust you to the protection of our Blessed Mother. May she accompany you on the path of preparation for the priesthood, and sustain you in the fulfilment of your priestly vocation.

I cordially bless the entire community of the Major Seminary of Tarnów.

10. Lastly, my cordial welcome is extended to the numerous groups of pilgrims who are taking part in this meeting. I am thinking especially of the *Association of the Families and Sufferers of Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus*, the executives and members of the *National Association of Insurance Agents*, the members of the *European Academy for Economic and Cultural Relations*, the technicians and players of the *Rome Basketball Society*, the representatives of the *Tanners Association*, the *Alpine soldiers* from Martinengo and the *Alpine Choir* from Lauzacco, the *Group of Emergency Radio Operators* from Bari and the pilgrims from the *Don Orione Centre* in Bergamo. I also greet the faithful from Messina, Brindisi, St Teresa Riva and all the other groups present here.

Dear brothers and sisters, I renew my deep gratitude for your visit, I invite you to turn your gaze to Mary, so present during this season of Advent. May the Immaculate Virgin who, with her "yes" to the Angel Gabriel, totally adhered to God's will, sustain you in your intention to make the grace of the Jubilee fruitful. May you also be accompanied by my Blessing, which I willingly extend to your families, to your communities of origin and to all those who are dear to you.

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