



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF ROME AND LAZIO  
IN PREPARATION FOR THE 18th WORLD YOUTH DAY**

*Thursday, 10 April 2003*

*Dear Young People,*

1. This year too, we have come together for a Meeting of prayer and celebration on the occasion of World Youth Day, the WYD!

I greet Cardinal Ruini, Vicar of Rome, and I thank him for his words; I will start by greeting the other Cardinals and Bishops present, and your priests and teachers. I greet the young people who have spoken to me on behalf of all the others and have offered me meaningful gifts, and each one of you, dear young people, boys and girls of Rome and of the Dioceses of Lazio who have gathered here. I greet the rain that has faithfully accompanied us; it more or less stopped, but it now seems to have started again!

I also greet those who are taking part in the Meeting of World Youth Day promoted by the Pontifical Council for the Laity and, with them, the delegations of young people from Toronto and Cologne, and the artists and witnesses who are accompanying us at today's event.

2. "*Behold your Mother!*" (Jn 19: 27). I chose these words of Jesus as the theme for this 18th World Youth Day.

When his "hour" had come, Jesus from the cross gave Mary his Mother to the disciple John, making her, through the disciple he loved, *Mother of all believers*, Mother of us all. Behold, Jesus says *to each one of us*, Behold Mary, my Mother, who from this day becomes your Mother too!

Let us ask ourselves: who is this Mother? To understand this better, I recommend, in this *Year of*

*the Rosary*, that you re-read the entire marvelous chapter VIII of the dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* of the Second Vatican Council. Mary, "in an utterly singular way... cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the Saviour's work of restoring supernatural life to souls. For this reason she is a mother to us in the order of grace" (n. 61; *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott, S.J., The America Press, 1966). And this supernatural motherhood will continue until the glorious coming of Christ.

Of course, he, Jesus Christ, is the *only Redeemer*. He is the *one Mediator* between God and man! However - as the Council teaches - Mary cooperates and takes part in his work of salvation. Thus, she is a Mother for whom we must have a deep and true devotion, a *profoundly Christocentric* devotion, indeed, rooted in the Trinitarian Mystery of God himself.

3. "*Behold, your mother!*. And from that hour", the Gospel continues, "the disciple took her into his own home" (Jn 19: 27).

Welcoming Mary into their home, into their life, is the privilege of every one of the faithful. This is especially true in difficult moments, such as those that you young people also have to live through at times in this period of your life. I remember this moment for me, when I was young and worked at the chemical factory, and I discovered these words: *Totus Tuus*. And with the power of these words I was able to get through the terrible war, the terrible Nazi occupation, and then through the other difficult experiences after the war. The possibility of taking Mary into our own home, into our own life, is offered to us all.

This is why today *I want to entrust you to Mary*. Dear friends, and I tell you from experience, open the doors of your life to her! Do not be afraid *to open wide the doors of your hearts to Christ* through the One who wants to bring you to him, so that you may be saved from sin and death! She will help you to listen to his voice and say "yes" to every plan that God conceives for you, for your good and for that of all humanity.

4. I entrust you to Mary while in spirit you are already on your way towards the *World Youth Day in Cologne*. The young people from Toronto have just brought here *the Holy Year Cross*. From Toronto to Cologne the Cross that next Sunday, Palm Sunday, they will present to their friends from Cologne. On the other hand, two youth from Rome have set under the Cross *the Icon of Mary* which stood guard over the "dawn watchmen" at Tor Vergata on the unforgettable World Youth Day in the Year 2000. Tor Vergata! So that it will always be clearly visible that Mary is a very powerful Mother who leads us to Christ, I would also like *this Icon of Mary to be presented* to the young people from Cologne next Sunday, along with the Cross and from now on, to be taken on pilgrimage round the world in preparation for World Youth Days.

With Mary, while you wait to meet the young people from all over the world in Cologne, remain in an atmosphere of prayer and inner listening to the Lord. For this reason, I would also like that as of

today, the Day be prepared for with constant prayer to be raised by the whole Church and specifically, in Italy, at four important places: *the Marian Shrine of Loreto* and the Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary in Pompei; here in Rome, at the *Youth Centre of San Lorenzo*, a stone's throw from St Peter's Basilica which for 20 years has welcomed young pilgrims to the Tomb of St Peter, and at the *Church of Sant'Agnese in Agone*, in Piazza Navona, where every Thursday evening since Holy Year 2000 young people can find an oasis of prayer before the Eucharist, and have an opportunity to receive the sacrament of Confession.

5. Thinking from this moment of the World Youth Day of Cologne, I would like to thank God once again for *the gift of the World Youth Days*. In these 25 years of my Pontificate I have been granted the grace to meet young people from every part of the world, especially on the occasion of these Days. Each one of them has been a "workshop of faith" where God and man have met, where every young person has been able to say: "You, O Christ, are "my Lord and my God"!"

They have been true schools of growth in the faith, of ecclesial life, of vocational response. Furthermore, we can certainly say that every Day has been marked by the motherly love of Mary; the Church has been an eloquent image of her loving motherly concern for the rebirth of youth. Here is the rain again! It is raining again and we young people love you, rain!

6. "*Behold your Mother!*" (Jn 19: 27), *Regina Pacis!* Responding to this invitation and taking Mary into your home will also mean *working for peace*. Mary, *Regina Pacis* (Queen of Peace), is indeed a Mother, and like every mother all she wants for her children is to see them living peacefully and in agreement with one another. In this tormented time in history, while terrorism and wars are threatening peace between men and women and religions, I would like to entrust you to Mary so that you may become *champions of the culture of peace*, today more necessary than ever.

Tomorrow will be the 40th anniversary of the publication of Bl. John XXIII's Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*. It is only by striving to build peace on the four pillars of *truth, justice, love and freedom* - as *Pacem in Terris* teaches us - that it will be possible to reinstitute cooperation among nations and to harmonize the different and contrasting interests of culture and institutions. *Regina Pacis, ora pro nobis!* Just a few more words and then I will let you go! Just another word and this word is about the Rosary.

7. [The Rosary], "the sweet chain that links us once again to God": *Carry it with you always!* The Rosary, recited with intelligent devotion, will help you assimilate the mystery of Christ, to learn from him the secret of peace and make it a project of life.

Far from being an escape from the problems of the world, the Rosary will motivate you to look responsibly and generously at them, and to find the strength to face them with the certainty of God's help and the firm determination to witness in all circumstances to "love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony" (Col 3: 14; cf. *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, n. 40).

With these sentiments, I urge you to continue on your way through life, on which I accompany you with my affection and my blessing. This morning I celebrated Mass with the intention of obtaining God's blessing on this meeting with the young people of Rome and of Lazio.

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## ACT OF ENTRUSTMENT TO MARY

*"Behold, your Mother!"* In

O Virgin Mary, Jesus  
on the Cross  
wanted to entrust us to you,  
not to lessen  
but to reaffirm  
his exclusive role as Saviour  
of the world.

If in the disciple John  
all the children of the Church were entrusted to you,  
the happier I am to see  
the young people of the world  
entrusted to you, O Mary.

To you, gentle Mother,  
whose protection I have always experienced,  
this evening I entrust them to you once again.

All seek refuge and  
protection under your mantle.  
You, Mother of divine grace,  
make them shine with  
the beauty of Christ!

The young people of this century,  
at the dawn of the new millennium, still live the torment that derives from sin,  
from hatred, from violence,  
from terrorism and from war.

But it is also the young to whom the Church looks confidently, knowing  
that with the help of God's grace,  
they will succeed in believing and in living as Gospel witnesses  
in present day history.

O Mary,  
help them to respond to their vocation.

Guide them to the knowledge of true love  
and bless their affections.  
Support them in times of suffering.  
Make them fearless heralds  
of Christ's greeting on Easter Day: Peace be with you!  
With them, I also entrust myself  
once again to you  
and with confident affection  
I repeat to you:  
*Totus Tuus ego sum!*  
I am all yours!

And each one of them  
cries to you, with me:

*Totus Tuus!*

*Totus Tuus!*

Amen.