



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO SPAIN

WELCOME CEREMONY

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II

International Airport of Madrid-Barajas

Saturday, 3 May 2003

Your Majesties,

Your Eminences,

Mr President and distinguished authorities,

Dear Bishops,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. With intense emotion, I arrive once again in Spain on my fifth Apostolic Journey to this noble and beloved nation. I greet everyone most cordially, those who are present here and all who are following this event on radio or television, addressing you with deep affection in the words of the risen Lord: "Peace be with you".

I wish for each one the peace that God alone, through Jesus Christ, can give to us; the peace that is a work of justice, of truth, of love and of solidarity; the peace that peoples only enjoy when they follow the dictates of God's law; the peace that makes itself felt to men and women, and to peoples who are brothers and sisters to one another.

Peace be with you, Spain!

2. I am grateful to His Majesty King Juan Carlos I for his presence here with the Queen, and especially for his words of welcome on behalf of the Spanish people. I also thank the President of

the Government and the other civil and military Authorities for their presence, and I express to them my appreciation for their collaboration in preparing the various events of this visit.

I greet with affection Cardinal Antonio María Rouco Varela, Archbishop of Madrid and President of the Spanish Bishops' Conference, the Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops, the priests, consecrated persons and the other faithful who form the Catholic community of this country which is almost *2,000 years old*. You are God's pilgrim people in Spain! A people who throughout its history has given so many proofs of love of God and neighbour, of fidelity to the Church and to the Pope, of noble sentiments and apostolic dynamism. I thank everyone, therefore, for this warm welcome.

3. Tomorrow I will have the joy of canonizing *five children of this land*. They knew how to accept the invitation of Jesus Christ: "Be my witnesses", proclaiming him with their life and with their death. At this time in history they are a light for us on our journey, to live the faith courageously, to stimulate our love for our neighbour and to continue building with hope a society based on peaceful coexistence and the moral and human uplifting of every citizen. I always follow with keen interest all that occurs in Spain. I note with pleasure *its progress in the well-being of all*. The process of development of a nation must be founded on *authentic and permanent values* which seek the good of each person, who is the subject of laws and duties, from the first instant of his or her life and acceptance in the family, and in the subsequent stages of his or her integration and participation in social life.

This afternoon I will meet *with the young people*, and I look forward with joy to that moment which will enable me to be in touch with those who are called to be *the protagonists of the new times*. I have total confidence in them, and I am certain that they do not want to disappoint God, the Church or the society from which they come.

4. At this supremely important time for the consolidation of a united Europe, I would like to recall the words with which I took my leave from Santiago de Compostela at the end of my first Apostolic Trip on Spanish territory in November 1982. From there I encouraged Europe with a cry full of love, reminding it of its rich and fruitful Christian roots: "*Europe, find yourself again. Be yourself... Revive your roots!*" (*Declaration to Europe, Santiago de Compostela, 9 November 1982, n. 4; ORE, 29 November 1982, p. 6*). I am certain that Spain will contribute the rich cultural and historical legacy of its Catholic roots and its own values to the integration of a Europe which, in the plurality of its cultures and respecting the identity of its member States, seeks a unity based on criteria and principles in which *the integral good of its citizens* holds sway.

5. I implore the Lord, for Spain and for the whole world, for a peace that is fruitful, stable and permanent, as well as a coexistence in unity, in the marvellous and varied diversity of its peoples and cities.

Through the intercession of the Immaculate Virgin and of the Apostle St James, may God bless Spain!

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