



The Holy See

**PILGRIMAGE
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO LOURDES ON THE OCCASION OF 150TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE PROMULGATION OF THE DOGMA
OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION**

***INTRODUCTION OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
TO THE TORCHLIGHT PROCESSION***

Accueil Notre-Dame, 14 August 2004

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

1. When the Virgin Mary appeared to Bernadette in the grotto at Massabielle, she began a *dialogue between Heaven and earth* which has lasted through time and continues to this day. Speaking to the young girl, Mary asked that people should come here *in procession*, as if to signify that this dialogue cannot be limited to words, but must become *a journey at her side along the pilgrim way of faith, hope and love*.

Here in Lourdes, for more than a century the Christian people have faithfully responded to that maternal summons, *walking each day* behind Christ in the Blessed Sacrament and processing each night amid songs and prayers in honour of the Lord's Mother.

This year the Pope joins you in this act of devotion and love for the Most Holy Virgin, the glorious woman of the Book of Revelation, crowned with twelve stars (cf. *Rev 12,1*). Holding in our hands *the lighted torch*, we recall and profess our faith in the Risen Christ. *From Him the whole of our life receives light and hope*.

2. To you, dear brothers and sisters, I entrust a particular intention for our prayer this evening: join me in imploring the Virgin Mary to obtain for our world *the longed-for gift of peace*.

May forgiveness and brotherly love take root in human hearts. May every weapon be laid down, and all hatred and violence put aside.

May everyone see in his neighbour *not an enemy* to be fought, *but a brother* to be accepted and loved, so that we may join in building a better world.

3. Together let us invoke the Queen of Peace and renew our commitment to the service of reconciliation, dialogue and solidarity. In this way we shall merit the happiness which the Lord has promised to the peacemakers (*Mt 5,9*).

I accompany you with my prayer and my blessing.

May God bless you!