



The Holy See

JOHN PAUL II *GENERAL AUDIENCE* Wednesday 14 January 1998

Jesus' "hour" is time of human salvation

1. The celebration of the Jubilee will invite us to focus our attention on the hour of salvation. Many times on various occasions, Jesus uses the word “hour” to indicate the moment determined by the Father for the fulfilment of the work of salvation. He speaks of it from the start of his public life, at the wedding feast of Cana, when he receives a request from his mother on behalf of the bride and groom who are in difficulty because of the lack of wine. To indicate the reason why he is opposed to answering the request, Jesus says to his mother: “My hour has not yet come” (*Jn* 2:4). This certainly means the hour for the first manifestation of Jesus’ messianic power. It is a particularly important hour, as the Gospel account informs us at its conclusion, where the miracle is presented as “the beginning” or the “start” of his signs (cf. *Jn* 2:11). But on the horizon appears the hour of Jesus’ passion and glorification (cf. *Jn* 7:30; 8:20; 12:23-27; 13:1; 17:1; 19:27), when he will complete the work of human Redemption. By working this “sign” through the efficacious intercession of Mary, Jesus manifests himself as the messianic Saviour. While he goes to meet the wedding couple, it is really he himself who is beginning his work as the Bridegroom, inaugurating the wedding feast which is an image of God’s kingdom (cf. *Mt* 22:2).

2. With Jesus the hour has come for a new relationship with God, the hour for *a new form of worship*: “The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth” (*Jn* 4:23). The basis for this universal worship is the fact that, by becoming incarnate, the Son has enabled men and women to share in his filial worship of the Father. The “hour” is also the time when *the work of the Son* is made manifest: “Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself” (*Jn* 5:25-26). The great hour in world history occurs when the Son gives his life, making his saving voice heard to those who are under the power of sin. It is the hour of Redemption.

3. All of Jesus’ earthly life is directed to this hour. At an agonizing moment shortly before his passion, Jesus says: “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour?’. No, for this purpose I have come to this hour” (*Jn* 12:27). With these words Jesus reveals the inner drama that is oppressing his soul in view of his approaching sacrifice. He has the

possibility of asking the Father that this terrible trial might pass. On the other hand, he does not wish to flee from this painful destiny: "For this purpose I have come". He has come to offer the sacrifice that will bring salvation to humanity.

4. This crucial hour is *willed and determined by the Father*. Before the hour chosen by the divine plan, his enemies have no power over Jesus. Many attempts were made to stop Jesus or to kill him. In relating one of these attempts, John's Gospel highlights the impotence of his adversaries: "They sought to arrest him; but no one laid hands on him, because his hour had not yet come" (*Jn* 7:30). When the hour comes, it also appears as *the hour of his enemies*. "This is your hour, and the power of darkness", Jesus says to "the chief priests and captains of the temple and elders, who had come out against him" (*Lk* 22:52-53). In this dark hour it seems that no one can stop the raging power of evil. Nevertheless, this hour also remains under the Father's power. He will allow Jesus' enemies to capture him. Their work is mysteriously included in the plan established by God for the salvation of all.

5. More than the hour of his enemies, the hour of his passion is thus *Christ's hour*, the hour when his mission is fulfilled. John's Gospel lets us perceive Jesus' state of mind at the beginning of the Last Supper: "When Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (*Jn* 13:1). It is thus the *hour of love*, which wants to go "to the end", that is, to the supreme gift. In his sacrifice Christ reveals perfect love to us: he could not have loved us more deeply! This decisive hour is both the hour of passion and the *hour of glorification*. According to John's Gospel, it is the hour when the Son of man is "lifted up from the earth" (*Jn* 12:32). The lifting up on the Cross is the lifting up to heavenly glory. Then the phase of the new relationship with humanity will begin, particularly with the disciples, as Jesus himself announces: "I have said this to you in figures; the hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in figures but tell you plainly of the Father" (*Jn* 16:25). The supreme hour is ultimately the moment when the Son returns to the Father. It clarifies the meaning of his sacrifice and sheds full light on the value of this sacrifice for humanity, redeemed and called to be united with the Son in his return to the Father.

To the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors the Holy Father said:

I warmly greet the group of Diocesan Pilgrimage Co-ordinators from the United States meeting in Rome. May your preparations for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 have as their principal aim the spiritual renewal of the pilgrims you assist. I welcome the members of the *B'nai B'rith* Anti-Defamation League, and I express the hope that your visit will help to strengthen the co-operation of recent years.

Upon all the English-speaking pilgrims, especially those from Denmark, Japan and the United States, I invoke the abundant blessings of almighty God.

Peace Appeal

Hatred continues to bathe the beloved African land in blood. In Algeria there are constant massacres that involve even women, children and the elderly. In Rwanda five missionaries belonging to the Congregation of the Daughters of the Resurrection, as well as two lay co-workers, were killed in the Diocese of Nyundo. Two other women religious were seriously wounded.

All our hearts are filled with dismay and sadness at these tragic incidents, which cannot fail to rouse the conscience of all humanity.

We offer our prayers for the victims of these ferocious massacres.

I extend my solidarity and spiritual closeness to all who are afflicted and in sorrow, as I express my heartfelt desire for the quick recovery of the wounded.

May the sacrifice of so many defenceless people lead to sentiments of amendment, forgiveness and, ultimately, peace.