



The Holy See

8th WORLD YOUTH DAY

MASS CELEBRATED WITH THE BISHOPS GATHERED
IN THE CATHEDRAL OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Friday, 13 August 1993

"On this rock I will build my Church" (Matth 16,18).

Dear Brother Bishops,

1. These words of Christ, which he pronounced near Caesarea Philippi, resound again today in the Cathedral of Denver. Here, in Colorado, at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, they acquire a special significance. *What is this rock on which Christ builds his Church? Rather, who is this rock?* This is the order of the questions which Christ's words suggest.

Illumined by the grace of revelation, Simon says who Jesus is: "You are the *Christ, the Son of the Living God*" (*Matth 16,16*). The Father himself communicates the truth about Jesus to Peter, in whom this truth comes alive through his obedience of faith (cf. *Rom 16,26*). "Blest are you, Simon son of John! *No mere man has revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father*" (*Matth 16,17*). First, Peter receives the inner revelation of truth in his heart, then he confesses this truth on his lips.

Replying, Jesus says who Simon is – "You are Peter" (*Matth 16,18*); that is, *you are Rock*. It is the *person of Peter, in so far as he confesses the apostolic faith*, who is the living stone, assimilated to Christ as the Church's foundation (cf. *Eph 2,20*).

This is the rock on which Christ built his Church from the beginning.

2. From the Altar of the Cathedral of Denver I warmly greet each one of you, who are taking part in the World Youth Day. You are here, just as I am, out of fidelity to our specific ministry in the

Church. We are here *to be with the young pilgrims*, during these days in which we are witnesses of the grace of the Holy Spirit at work in so many generous young hearts.

In a sense we, the Pastors, have been called here by the young people themselves. Their response to the "World Youth Day" clearly indicates that they have perceived something of what the Eternal Father reveals to the "little ones" (cf. *Matth 11,25*). They are thirsty to know more, to penetrate more deeply into the mystery of Christ and the Church. They know that the Father can open that door to them, just as he revealed the heart of the mystery to Peter at Caesarea Philippi.

In this interior advancement of grace, we Bishops and priests have a great responsibility. Are we always ready to help the young people discover the transcendent elements of the Christian life? From our words and actions do they conclude that the Church is indeed a mystery of communion with the Blessed Trinity, and not just a human institution with temporal aims? Through our ministry the young people present here need to be able to *discover, above all, that they are Temples of God*, and that the Spirit of God dwells in them (cf. *1Cor 3,16*).

These are the days in which *the light of the Gospel must shine before them* with a particular brilliance.

For they are the Church of today and tomorrow – the Church that rises on the rock of Divine Truth, *on the rock of the apostolic faith*. The Church of the Third Millennium needs to be firmly planted in the heart of the new generation of the sons and daughters of the Living God.

3. Venerable and dear Brothers!

Let us commend these days to Mary, the Seat of Wisdom. Let us entrust to her all the young people who have come here. Let us entrust to her the Church of the young throughout the world, in every country and on every continent.

Let us entrust to her prayers *ourselves* and our brother priests, all those who live the consecrated life, all our brothers and sisters in the faith. May she guide *our ministry* here in Denver. And may this whole experience of the World Youth Day be for us a re-awakening of trust in the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" which Christ entrusted to the Church in the person of Peter (cf. *Matth 16,19*).

Amen.