



The Holy See

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE JOHN PAUL II

JUBILEE PILGRIMAGE OF ROMANIANS

Tuesday, 9 May 2000

1. *"The light has come into the world" (Jn 3: 19).*

The Great Jubilee was proclaimed precisely to celebrate this coming: the coming of the eternal Word, "God from God, Light from Light" into our history 2,000 years ago. Born of the Virgin Mary in our mortal flesh, he revealed the Father's love to the world: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son" (*Jn 3: 16*).

The light of God's love appeared in Bethlehem in the "fullness of time" and, after the "stupendous combat" with the darkness of sin, shone radiantly in the Easter Resurrection. The Great Jubilee, opened in the joy of Christmas, culminates in the glory of Easter.

With paschal faith the Church proclaims to the world that man is redeemed in Christ and healed of his mortal illness. With this faith the Successor of Peter has called the faithful to celebrate the Jubilee Year, so that in the name of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, every person might find salvation (cf. *Acts 4: 10*). This is the original apostolic message which re-echoes through the same Spirit from generation to generation to reach all nations.

2. The Gospel of Christ makes the history of peoples fruitful and calls them to open themselves to the mystery of God's kingdom through the humble but necessary service of the holy apostolic Church, gathered round the Bishop of Rome, servant of the servants of God, and the Bishops in communion with him. It is with this knowledge, brothers and sisters of the beloved Romanian nation, that you have gathered here today in the Vatican Basilica to celebrate your Jubilee. I am pleased to extend my cordial welcome to you all.

I affectionately greet, first of all, the Bishops of the Greek Catholic and Latin Churches, with particular gratitude to Archbishop Lucian Muresan of Fagaras and Alba Iulia, President of the Romanian Episcopal Conference. I also greet the priests, religious and lay people who have come in large numbers to take part in this national pilgrimage. My cordial wishes extend to all the brothers and sisters in the faith who have spiritually joined us in Romania for this important and almost historic celebration.

3. Three centuries have now passed since the Synod of the Romanian Church of Transylvania completed, on 7 May 1700 in Alba Iulia, the *journey to union with the See of Peter* begun a few years earlier. That act expressed the desire of the Bishops, priests and faithful, who thus saw union with Rome restored, while preserving and safeguarding the Eastern rite, the calendar, the Romanian liturgical language, customs and traditions. This act was the response allowed by those times to the tireless *yearning for unity* in the hearts of so many sincere disciples of Christ.

Today we give thanks to almighty God for all the good lavished in these 300 years of communion and, at the same time, we implore him for a peaceful, prosperous future in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To accomplish his great works, God uses human beings, whom he chooses with care and gives to his People. How can we forget here *the praiseworthy Pastors* of your Church, Bishops Athanasius Anghel, Innocent Micu-Klein and Peter Aron, through whose work the union not only overcame many difficulties but bore abundant good fruits for the entire population? To mention but a few: the rebirth of religious life, the growth of schools, attention to the living conditions and civil rights of the people and an effective contribution to the national culture and to science itself. The well-known writer Ion Eliade Radulescu was able to say that "the Romanian sun rose" in Blaj.

4. In faithfully following Christ, her Bridegroom, the Romanian Greek Catholic Church *has known suffering and the cross*, especially in the last century when the cruel atheistic regime decreed her suppression. An effort was made to reduce man to the earthly level, to make him forget the existence of heaven and of a love greater than any human misery. Thanks to God this plan did not succeed in being imposed forever. Christ is risen and with him all the Christian Communities in Romania.

On the occasion of my unforgettable visit to your land precisely at this time last year, I wanted to pray in Bucharest at the tombs of the martyrs for the faith in the Catholic cemetery of Belu, thus paying homage to the great sacrifice of so many Bishops, priests and faithful who accepted martyrdom as the supreme confirmation of their fidelity to Christ and to the Successors of Peter.

As we celebrate the Jubilee of the Union today, I would again like to express my gratitude and admiration for their witness. In particular I extend a grateful greeting to dear Cardinal Alexandru Todea who, despite his imprisonment and isolation, bravely continued to fulfil his duties as Pastor

and led the Greek Catholic Church into the new situation created by the coming of democratic freedom.

Dear friends, preserve in your hearts the living memory of this martyrdom and pass it on to future generations so that it can continue to be a source of inspiration for a Christian witness that is always generous and authentic. Martyrdom is above all an intense spiritual experience: it flows from a heart that loves the Lord as the supreme truth and the greatest, indispensable good. May this treasure of your Church also bear abundant fruits in your regained freedom.

5. I would now like to extend a particularly affectionate greeting *to the faithful of the Latin Church*. They too, after being long deprived of freedom, were able to strengthen and expand their pastoral structures: religious life has flourished again; catechesis has been vigorously resumed; charitable works, often planned together and with the help of Catholics in other countries, make a significant contribution to the nation's rebirth and open people to a collaboration that expands horizons in the name of solidarity in Christ.

Dear brothers and sisters, your primary commitment must be to enable others to know and meet the Lord Jesus, so that he can heal wounded hearts, form correct consciences concerned for the common good, open people to well-founded hopes, not fleeting consumerism or the quest for material wealth at all costs, but to the true values that alone can create a secure and happy future, because they are based on the Word which does not disappoint.

6. Dear Catholic faithful of Romania, you can be proud of the effective role you have played in your nation's history and a role you must continue to play enthusiastically by treasuring your rich traditions. You will thus help to foster the growth of all society.

So that this can happen more quickly and effectively, however, it is necessary to restore full *unity among Christ's disciples*. The unity of the Church is a gift of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, to whom we must ceaselessly pray. It is also a task entrusted to each of us, a path which we must never tire of traveling with perseverance, even if problems sometimes threaten to discourage us.

By fixing our gaze on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith (cf. *Heb 12: 2*), make your commitment to unity ever deeper, and continually work so that one day, not too distant, it can become a consoling reality for everyone.

7. *"He who does what is true comes to the light"* (*Jn 3: 21*).

At this celebration let us pray that the whole Catholic community in Romania, Greek Catholic, Latin and Armenian, can "speak the truth in love" (*Eph 4: 15*), so that their face may fully reflect the light of Christ and thus, in turn, be light for the nations to which it is sent.

Bishops, priests, consecrated persons, families, young people and children: grow to full maturity in Christ, through whom the whole body builds itself up in love (cf. *Eph* 4: 16)!

In ancient writings your country is called the "Garden of the Virgin Mary". This beautiful image reminds us of the loving concern with which the Mother of God cares for her children. May she who heartened the first Christian community with her presence and prayer guide and support the life of the Greek Catholic and Latin Churches in their members so that they may shine out, through the Holy Year as well, without spot or wrinkle for the glory of God. Amen.

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