



The Holy See

MASS WITH THE COMMUNITIES FROM THREE ROMAN PARISHES:

St John of the Cross
St Felicity and the Child Martyrs
Sts Chrysanthus and Daria

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Paul VI Audience Hall
Saturday, 27 March 2004

1. "*Behold, I am doing a new thing*" (Is 43: 19).

The Prophet Isaiah invites us to look at the new thing God wants to bring about in the history of salvation. For the people of Israel it was to be liberation from slavery in Babylon and the return to their homeland. For the people of the New Covenant, on the other hand, it was liberation from the slavery of sin, brought about by Christ in his Passover of death and Resurrection.

Aware of this, let us set out on the last stretch of our Lenten journey, encouraged by the liturgy to reject evil with determination and to accept the purifying, renewing grace of God. The Gospel passage just proclaimed urges us to do this. In it, Christ manifests his merciful love, ready to forgive the sinful woman who has repented and to give her the hope of a new life (cf. Jn 8: 1-11).

2. Dear brothers and sisters of the Parishes of St John of the Cross, St Felicity and the Child Martyrs and St Chrysanthus and Daria, I am pleased to welcome you this evening for the Eucharistic Celebration and I cordially greet you all.

I address a grateful greeting to the Cardinal Vicar who has given me a brief outline of your communities. With him, I am pleased to greet the Auxiliary Bishop of the Northern Sector, your beloved Parish Priests: Fr Enrico Gemma, Fr Eusebio Mosca of the Vocationist Fathers and Fr

Albino Marin, the parochial vicars and the priests who work with them.

I greet the women religious who live and work in your parishes as well as the associations, the groups, the movements and the faithful involved in spreading the Gospel. Next, I do not want to leave out those who were unable to come here, and especially the lonely, the elderly and the sick. I reach out to one and all with an affectionate greeting.

3. I know that you prepared yourselves for this meeting by reflecting on the most important and urgent *pastoral priorities and apostolic challenges* for you at this time. You have very rightly identified the *promotion of fraternal communion* among all parishioners as an indispensable condition for effective Christian witness in the contemporary world. A united parish, in which the diversity of the ministries and charisms is respected, shows a welcoming family face, motivated solely by the desire *to proclaim and witness to the Gospel*. Dear brothers and sisters, continue on this path!

To you too, I would also like to repeat the invitation "*Duc in altum!*" (put out into the deep) that I addressed to the whole Church at the end of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 with my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*. Put out into the deep, show concern not only for so-called "neighbours", but also for those who live on the fringes of the faith.

4. Have at heart first and foremost families and young people. May a priority goal of your evangelizing action be *the pastoral care of youth*, making the most of the after-school centres as places for the human, spiritual and ecclesial formation of children and young people. In these centres the different generations can meet to encourage the transmission of the faith to the youngest who need to identify with exemplary figures.

Nor should you slacken your efforts to inspire *vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life* by your prayers and example: the Church of Rome needs holy priests and men and women religious, men and women who are totally and joyfully consecrated to God for the good of his People.

Lastly, pay attention to the *spiritual and material needs* of your brethren, both near and far. In this regard, I thank you for the commitment that each community has honoured me with today by *its adoption of an oversees orphan*.

5. The words of the Apostle Paul spring to mind: "*I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus*" (Phil 3: 8). This is how St Paul expresses the radical change that occurred in his life: from being a persecutor, he became the Apostle to the Gentiles because *Christ Jesus has made me "his own"* (cf. Phil 3: 12).

Dear brothers and sisters, let yourselves also be "won" by Christ! May his words of salvation and

merciful love penetrate your consciences and guide you in your daily decisions.

May Mary, faithful to the end to the mission entrusted to her, help you to be true to Christ without faltering, to be his credible witnesses among the people in your neighbourhood. The Gospel also needs you to reach the many who, perhaps unconsciously, are waiting for it. Christ is counting on you. Do not disappoint him!

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