



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER TO YOUTH MEETING IN SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

7 August 1999

Dear Young People of Europe,

A very affectionate greeting to all young Europeans!

1. I address you who have gathered here in Santiago de Compostela for the European Youth Meeting at the tomb of the first Apostle who gave his life as a witness to the Lord. I greet you from Rome and express my great trust in you and my joy in this meeting, which I join in spirit as a pilgrim of faith. For days or weeks, on foot or in various ways, you have traveled the 'Way to Santiago', setting out from the different cities and countries of our beloved old continent. You represent the youth of all Europe: Mediterranean, Central and Northern, Anglo-Saxon and Slav Europe. You are the European youth who, motivated by faith in Jesus Christ, have set out in this Holy Year of Compostela, the gate to the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000.

2. Dear young people, the Church looks to you with hope; she counts on you. You are the generation called to transmit the gift of faith to the new millennium. Do not fail Christ who, full of love, calls you to follow him and sends you out like the Apostle James to the ends of the earth. Take in your hands the pilgrim's staff - which is the word of God - and travel the roads of Europe, announcing with courage the Good News of Christ, the perfect Man, the new Man who reveals to the men and women of all times their greatness and dignity as children of God. This is the best service you can give society today: to offer the Gospel of Christ, incarnated in your life with all its radical newness. A newness that can win over the hearts of the young with its beauty, goodness and truth.

3. Young people of Europe: Let yourselves be renewed by Christ! The new evangelization - of which you must be protagonists - begins in oneself, through the conversion of the heart to Christ. Live in intimacy with him; discover the riches of his person and his mystery in prayer; turn to him

when you are in need of the grace of forgiveness; seek him in the Eucharist, the source of life; serve him in the poor and needy who await his beneficial coming. Do not be satisfied with mediocrity. The kingdom of heaven is for those who are determined to enter it (cf. *Lk 16:16; Mt 11:12*). As I said 10 years ago here on this Mountain of Joy: Do not be afraid to be holy! Have the courage and humility to present yourselves to the world determined to be holy, since full, true freedom is born from holiness. This aspiration will help you discover genuine love, untainted by selfish and alienating permissiveness; it will make you grow in humanity through study and work; it will open you to a possible vocation to the total gift of self in the priesthood or the consecrated life; it will transform you from being 'slaves' of power, pleasure, money or a career, to being free young persons, 'masters' of your own life, ever ready to serve your needy brothers and sisters in the image of Christ the servant, to bear witness to the Gospel of love.

4. I entrust the spiritual fruits of the Jubilee Year of Compostela and of this European Youth Meeting to the Virgin Mary who, in the Gate of Glory of the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, is portrayed with an expressive gesture, accepting the divine will. She who according to a pious tradition gave great support to the Apostle James, is now called as the Star of the new millennium to guide the evangelizing steps of the Lord's new apostles as they build a united and peace-loving Europe, faithful to its Christian roots and the authentic values which made its history glorious and its presence beneficial on other continents; a Europe still capable of being a beacon of civilization and of encouraging world progress.

5. Before ending this Message, I would also like to greet the Bishops, the beloved priests and men and women religious, and all those who work with them in the pastoral care of young people.

I invoke the 'great pardon' of God the Father, rich in mercy, upon all of you, pilgrims of Compostela, and as I entrust you to the powerful protection of St James, with deep affection I impart my Apostolic Blessing to you: in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.