



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE ITALIAN CATHOLIC FEDERATION
OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

Dear Young People of F.U.C.I.!

1. I am happy to know that your Federation (*Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana* means *Italian Catholic Federation of University Students*) is preparing to celebrate its national Congress, dedicated to what is now a particularly burning issue for the Church and society: "*Solidarity in the World of Interdependence*". In cordially greeting the participants and your members, I want to assure you of my spiritual closeness and I wish you all the best for the success of your association's important meeting.

I wish to guide your deliberations of the next few days with a few reflections, that are particularly close to my heart and that I want to commend to your generous and watchful hearts and minds.

You are young Catholic university students. Students, I think of you as sensitive and courageous people who have discovered the beauty of a life informed by faith in the Lord Jesus and lived in full communion with the Church. Never be ashamed of the Gospel! Do not let yourselves be overcome by the fear of professing with humble boldness the joy of belonging to the ecclesial community. Do not confuse dialogue with an uncritical acceptance of fashionable opinions, but, following the exhortation of the Apostle Paul, "test everything; hold fast what is good" (1 Thes 5,21).

This service to the Truth must have the precious support of a solid and precise formation, constantly nourished by meditation on the Word of God, supported by those who guide you on the journey of faith, regularly checked on the basis of criteria suitable for discerning the genuine ecclesial identity of an association such as yours, determined to be in full and constant communion with the Pastors of the Church.

2. The specific sphere of activity of the F.U.C.I. is that of the university. Your mission is therefore

to be "leaven, salt, and light" of the Gospel in the areas of scientific research and professional qualification. To do this, it is primarily necessary to cultivate an intense spiritual life, nourished by listening to the Word of God, by incessant prayer, and by participation in the liturgy of the Church.

Besides devoting yourselves to study and the activities of the association, you must always be conscious of being above all contemplatives of the mystery of God.

May your serene and joyful Christian witness, lived in loving communion with those who share the Gospel ideal in other ecclesial groups as well, help everyone to encounter the person of Jesus. He alone can give life meaning and offer full and sure salvation to the heart hungry for freedom and true happiness. Only in a culture inspired by Christianity can authentic human values find their integral realization.

As for the speech you use to proclaim the good news of the Lord Jesus, it must be inspired by the genuine sincerity of true witnesses of faith. In this way the accent of bitter polemic can be avoided, as well as the risks of a sort of "inferiority complex", that has at times unfortunately crept into the mentality of some Catholics. I exhort you to take up wholeheartedly and with understanding the "cultural project" of the Church in Italy, generously offering the precious contribution of an intelligent, faithful, and creative mediation.

3. I know that on the occasion of this national Congress you intend to reflect upon a particularly urgent and delicate theme: the progressive intensification of relations between peoples, a phenomenon today qualified with the term "globalization". In this regard, I wish to recall certain fundamental principles, that can help to guide this phenomenon in the right direction.

The growing interdependence between peoples, while requiring the rejection of terrorism and violence as feasible ways of rebuilding the essential conditions for justice and freedom, demands above all a strong moral, cultural, and economic solidarity and a political organization of the international society that can guarantee the rights of all peoples.

The solution to the evil of underdevelopment and the tragic situations in which millions of people live and die is of a fundamentally ethical nature, and consistent economic and political choices must correspond to this fact. The first and decisive contribution for a development truly worthy of man is represented by support for programmes of cultural education. As I affirmed in the Encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, true human progress "does not derive primarily from money, material assistance or technological means, but from the formation of consciences and the gradual maturing of ways of thinking and patterns of behaviour" (n. 58). Certainly the reform of international trade and the global financial system should also be pursued, but everyone is called to make specific pledges according to his means, modifying his lifestyle as necessary, in order that a just development can be achieved, whose benefits can be made available to all.

In fact, as I have emphasized on other occasions, cooperating in the development of peoples "is an imperative which obliges each and every man and woman, as well as societies and nations" (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 32).

4. Dear young people, continue in your ecclesial, cultural, and associative commitments following the example of Christian life and witness of the many "fucini" who have preceded you in the sign of faith and in the generous acceptance of the values and ideals of the F.U.C.I.

I entrust you and the work of this Congress to the maternal protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Seat of Wisdom, and, assuring you of my prayers and affection, I impart to you, your Assistants, family members, and friends, my heartfelt blessing.

From the Vatican, 26 April 2002.

JOHN PAUL II