



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II FOR WORLD DAY OF TOURISM 2000*

1. The Great Jubilee, which opened the new millennium, is a time of grace that illumines the entire life of the Church. It is a providential occasion of deep renewal for believers, a repeated invitation to return to the Gospel sources. This invitation concerns the whole Church in all her activities, projects and prospects. It is in this spirit, then, that Christians must observe the World Day of Tourism which will be held on 27 September 2000. Looking at tourism in the perspective of the Jubilee Meeting, they will seek to draw motives from it for a stronger Gospel renewal in view of the expectations and challenges of the present time.

The Jubilee, which recalls the central event of human history, becomes a providential opportunity for Christians to confess their faith and to evangelize, in the firm awareness that the Incarnation of the Son of God and the salvation which he has accomplished by his Death and Resurrection are the true criterion for evaluating all that happens in time and every effort to make life more human (cf. *Incarnationis mysterium*, n. 1).

In this perspective, I would like to offer several reflections to help show more clearly the value of this significant event, which has been given a stimulating theme this year by the World Tourism Organization: "*Technology and Nature: Two Challenges for Tourism at the Dawn of the 21st Century*".

2. The Jubilee is a great spiritual, personal and community experience. Its centre should be the believer's interior encounter with the merciful God, who in Christ, the only Saviour of every person and of the whole person, opens his fatherly arms to him. However, the Jubilee is also a community encounter between believers, who are called to spread Christ's message in the various realities of the world, where today, thanks to the development of modern technology, intercommunication has become increasingly widespread.

Nature and technology are the two principal areas where contemporary man knows he can

express his potential, obeying the command of the Creator, who set him over the whole world (cf. *Eucharistic Prayer IV*). The Jubilee is also meant to spur believers, purified by their encounter with the Lord, to gain new enthusiasm for carrying out their mission in the world. It involves constant attention to the reality of the cosmos, to the unfolding of history, to the concrete existence of individuals and peoples. The saving message of Christ must be proclaimed everywhere because, as the Second Vatican Council recalled, "it is man himself who must be saved: it is mankind that must be renewed" (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 3). This is the constant objective guiding the Church's steps and motivating her continual efforts to bring the light of the Gospel to every human situation.

In this context, the celebration of the World Day of Tourism is proposed as a useful occasion for reflection on the possibilities that tourism can offer to evangelization. This concerns not only those professionally involved in tourism or those who devote some of their free time to it, but also those who live in tourist areas or belong to Christian communities that are in constant contact with pilgrims and tourists.

3. Technology and nature are two major challenges to tourism in our time. They prompt us to reconsider some of its significant aspects and the pastoral opportunities resulting from them.

Tourism is changing its appearance under pressure from new patterns of life. From being a time of "rest", tourism is becoming more and more an opportunity for travel and cultural holidays. The widespread desire to "rediscover" nature and the "wish" to make new acquaintances and have new experiences are growing. By using the modern possibilities offered by technology, it is possible to make new contacts, family or community trips, and exchange visits between individuals of various cities and nations, especially young people.

Precisely because of its growing potential, tourism prompts certain reflections which are also emphasized by the message of the Great Jubilee. Here I would like to refer to two aspects of the Jubilee journey: the encounter with Christ and community sharing, which tourism can foster. If it is inspired by the Jubilee spirit, tourism can, in fact, become a providential opportunity for meeting others and a valuable occasion for solidarity.

4. First of all, *an opportunity for meeting others*. In the Jubilee the Church proclaims that 2,000 years ago God came in person to speak to man of himself and to show him the path by which he may be reached (*Tertio millennio adveniente*, n. 6). The divine initiative taken then continues to increase its effectiveness today, enabling human beings of every age, and thus our contemporaries as well, to have a personal experience of Christ's presence in their own history.

The place where this encounter occurs is first and foremost the celebration of the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. In these sacraments, however, it is the inner life that finds its meaning and direction in the light that shines from faith. In this regard, holidays and journeys can

be beneficial times for filling gaps in one's humanity and spirituality.

I firmly hope that tourism will always be an occasion for fruitful encounters: *the encounter with God*, who shows us his love and his providence in Creation and human achievement; *the encounter with oneself*, in the silence of reflection and interior listening; *the encounter with others*, to foster peaceful harmony among individuals and peoples.

5. Tourism is also an *occasion for solidarity*. With its call for inner conversion and reconciliation with our brethren, the Jubilee invites believers and people of good will to establish a social order based on mercy, justice and peace. It spurs us to be aware of the responsibilities we all have towards nature and towards the situations of poverty and exploitation which affect so many people and numerous countries of the world.

Thus the Jubilee Message encourages pilgrims and tourists to have eyes that can "see" reality beyond the superficial level, especially when there is an opportunity to visit places and situations where people live in precarious human conditions and their longing for equitable development is seriously undermined by factors of environmental imbalance or structural injustices.

Tourism, which has now assumed international dimensions, can thus make a valuable contribution to the culture of solidarity and can foster that international cooperation which the Jubilee encourages (cf. *Incarnationis mysterium*, n. 12). The over 600 million people who annually move from one nation to another could make tourism a primary factor in building a world open to the cooperation of all, through mutual knowledge and direct contact with different realities.

6. I ardently hope that the World Day of Tourism in this Jubilee Year will help tour leaders and operators, believers and people of good will, individuals and communities, to become aware of the challenges and possibilities offered by such a vast number of people on the move.

To all who work in this sector, I express my appreciation of their contribution to the good use of free time and to the fostering of friendly relations between individuals and peoples. I am particularly grateful to the pastoral workers who spend all their energies so that the Gospel will also permeate this exceptional area of human life.

I invoke the heavenly assistance of Mary, Star of Evangelization, upon you all, as I cordially impart a special Blessing to each of you as a pledge of constant goodwill.

From Castel Gandolfo, 29 July 2000.

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