



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO GREAT BRITAIN

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II DURING THE VISIT TO SAINT JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL

Edinburgh

Tuesday, 1 June 1982

My dear friends and children in Jesus Christ,

1. I am delighted to be making this visit to Saint Joseph's Hospital, Rosewell, and I have come for several reasons. First, to greet you the patients in the care of the hospital, suffering from both mental and physical handicap, and also the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul who administer the hospital, with the medical advisers, nursing and auxiliary staff, chaplains and voluntary workers for the handicapped in general, and the parents and families of those who are receiving this special care.

Another reason for my visit is *to bear witness to the Church's mission from Christ* to care for all God's people, especially those most in need. I am interested to know that the ancient Gaelic language of Scotland has a most telling phrase, *corramaich fo chùram Dhè*, which speaks of the handicapped as living under God's protection - "God's handicapped". Such a sensitive description, or title, captures a whole variety of profoundly Christian insights into the meaning of life and its dignity, a life which all of us have received from the Creator and whose course we share in various ways as separate individuals. And what is more, for the baptized this is a new life of grace in and through Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

2. Those who do not enjoy the fullness of what is called a normal way of life, through either mental or serious physical handicap, are often compensated in part by qualities which people often take for granted or even distort, under the influence of a materialistic society: such things as a radiant love - transparent, innocent and yearning - and the attraction of loving and selfless care. In this

regard, we often find in the Gospels the refreshing example of Jesus himself, and the *loving bond of affection between him and the sick or disabled*: how many were his exertions for them, the great words of faith addressed to them, and his wonderful interventions on their behalf, “for power came forth from him” (*Luc. 6, 19*; cfr. *Marc. 1, 32-34*). There were times when he went out of his way to identify himself with the sick and the suffering, he who was to suffer such a Passion and death himself: “I was sick and you visited me . . . As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (*Matth. 25, 36. 40*).

3. These latter words of Jesus are also a source of great *consolation to all those who care for the sick and disabled*: nurses and medical staff, sisters and chaplains, parents, voluntary helpers and friends. For your loving care and self-sacrifice are all too often a source of your own suffering, through tiredness, emotional and mental strain, and other such burdens. So much so that, when you identify with the handicapped in your loving and attentive service to them, you also share the accolade of Saint Paul: “In my flesh I make up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church” (*Col. 1, 24*; cfr. *2 Cor. 1, 5; 12, 19*). And when you really feel at your lowest ebb, our Lord himself has a further and very personal message of comfort: “Come to me, all who labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (*Matth. 11, 28-30*). These words of encouragement from Christ, which I pass on to you in his name, are meant also for *those who are caring for the handicapped* at home, and trying to give them as normal a family life as possible.

4. I know from Cardinal Gray that this Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh, as well as other Dioceses in Scotland, provides a reassuring and supportive role through *special Masses and reunions for the handicapped and their helpers* at regular intervals in various of Christian cooperation and service, you are admirably obeying the call to rejoice with those who rejoice and to suffer with those who suffer (Cfr. *Rom. 12, 15*). This offers not only a stimulus to a truly human and humanizing disposition, but also a sign of communion that enriches both the one who gives and the one who receives.

5. No visit to Rosewell would be complete without mentioning a young woman whose holy life and final suffering gave full expression to the message from Sacred Scripture that we have reflected on this morning: *the Venerable Margaret Sinclair*, known later in the religious life as Sister Mary Francis of the Five Wounds, Poor Clare Colletine, who lived from 1900 until 1925. For it was to Rosewell that Margaret came on holiday with other members of her family from their home in Edinburgh. Margaret could well be described as one of God’s little ones who, through her very simplicity, was touched by God with the strength of real holiness of life, whether as a child, a young woman, an apprentice, a factory-worker, member of a Trade Union, or a professed Sister in religion. How appropriate it is then that Rosewell should be chosen for the location of the Margaret Sinclair Centre, the purpose of which is to make her inspiring example better known and to promote her Cause for Beatification. I fully appreciate the aspirations of the Catholics of Scotland,

and elsewhere, for that singular event to be realized, and I know that you are praying that it may come about.

With this recollection of the Venerable Margaret Sinclair, I leave you with her inspiration. In drawing us to love and assist the handicapped, the Lord Jesus touches our lives with his strength, and finally rewards us according to his promise: "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (*Matth. 25, 40*).

Praised be Jesus Christ!

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