



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE BISHOPS OF NORTHERN ENGLAND  
ON THEIR «AD LIMINA APOSTOLORUM» VISIT**

*Friday, 29 October 1982*

*Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,*

1. For me, *Pentecost 1982* will always be linked with Liverpool, Manchester and York - indeed, with all the local Churches that make up the Northern Province of England, and which you worthily represent as Pastors of God's people. With deep affection in our Lord Jesus Christ I welcome all of you, the Ordinaries and Auxiliary Bishops of Liverpool, Lancaster, Salford, Leeds, Middlesbrough and Hexham and Newcastle. My greeting of peace in the Lord goes also to Bishop Moverley of Hallam, who is prevented by illness from being here with us today, and to the Bishops of Shrewsbury and Portsmouth.

2. Pentecost 1982 found us all united in prayer, with Mary the Mother of Jesus, invoking the Holy Spirit, asking him to renew his wonders of grace throughout the Church. We asked him to abide with us, to renew our hearts and minds, our homes and families, our cities, towns and villages. We asked him to sustain our people in their magnificent efforts to follow Christ in the concrete circumstances of daily life, with its problems and difficulties, such as unemployment, poverty and sickness. We asked the Holy Spirit to come and *to renew the face of the earth*.

3. But Pentecost 1982 also evokes another Pentecost, a continuing Pentecost - that new Pentecost foreseen and ardently desired by my predecessor John XXIII. Just yesterday we commemorated the anniversary of his election to the Papacy, and this circumstance too draws our attention to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Church in our day. His whole Pontificate was aimed at fostering *genuine renewal in the Church*, through docility to the Holy Spirit always prompting total fidelity to all the requirements of the Gospel. He repeatedly proclaimed the need for renewal in the Church. In his first Encyclical, *Ad Petri Cathedram*, he spoke of the need for a

deeper recognition of truth, a salutary renewal of Christian morals and the restoration of unity, harmony and peace. Subsequent Encyclicals he devoted to individual key issues: the priesthood, the missions, the necessity of penance as a condition for true renewal, the blessing of peace in the world, and, finally, the Church's Social Teaching. In all of his pronouncements he showed deep human concern and keen pastoral sensitivity. His heart was with the poor, the destitute, those in trouble, affliction, suffering or sin - the whole People of God, fallen but redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, making their pilgrim way to the Father, through Christ and with Christ and in Christ.

4. In this context John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council, knowing that what was really needed was *a Council of a pastoral nature* that would speak of the mercy and love of God for his people, and would inaugurate a new era of hope for mankind. But precisely because every genuine pastoral initiative needs a strong doctrinal basis, precisely because there can be no dichotomy between God's word and man's true well-being and happiness, John XXIII, on the opening day of the Council, 11 October 1962, made the following statement: "The greatest concern of the Ecumenical Council is this: that the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine should be more effectively guarded and taught".

Commenting on these words to a group of Bishops, I once mentioned that "this explains Pope John's inspiration; this is what the new Pentecost was to be: this is why the Bishops of the Church - in the greatest manifestation of collegiality in the history of the world - were called together: so that the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine should be more effectively guarded and taught' . . . And what John XXIII considered to be the aim of the Council, I consider as the aim of this postconciliar period" (IOANNIS PAULI PP. II *Allocutio ad Episcopos Foederatum Statuum Americae Septemtrionalis*, 4, die 5 oct. 1979: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, II 2 (1979) 633-634).

5. In diligently guarding and teaching this sacred deposit of God's word, the Church has the means also of making a contribution to numerous fields of human activity. In your local Churches you yourselves bear witness to the fact that the spiritual renewal enkindled by the light of faith is deeply *solicitous for all the needs of the human person*. It is with the profound conviction of faith, rooted in the word of God, that we proclaim: "If any one has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" (*1 Io. 3, 17*).

If it is true - and it is - that our pastoral solicitude must embrace our people in all their needs, it is also true that *our greatest contribution* to them is the proclamation of God's word in all its fullness and power. As we transmit the word of God with pastoral fidelity, the world will often rebel; it may accuse us of intransigence or irrelevance. But our criterion remains *fidelity to Christ's word*, which, in turn, is synonymous with the true welfare of our brothers and sisters.

6. As we ourselves pursue in the modern world the delicate mission of guarding and teaching the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine, Jesus himself gently challenges us, saying: *Trust me*; trust

my word; trust the *power* of my word to attract hearts, to convince consciences, to dissipate doubts, to soothe pain; trust the truth of my word to prevail over deception, to refute error, to destroy falsehood and to ensure authentic Christian freedom. Jesus long since assured the Church: "If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (*Io.* 8, 36). Without the presence of Jesus in our midst, and without his Holy Spirit guiding the Magisterium of the Church, we could never fulfil our apostolic mandate and our pastoral charge. But because of the assistance that the Lord gives us, I can repeat to you with the Apostle Peter: "Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares for you" (*1 Petr.* 5, 7). And Jesus himself says: "Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me" (*Io.* 14, 1).

This *total trust in Christ and in his word*, venerable and dear Brothers, is the object of my prayer for you and for all my Brothers in the Episcopate. It is a total trust that is fostered in prayer and that cannot exist except in holiness of life. It is manifested in pastoral serenity and in deep personal peace. It is, above all, a gift of the Holy Spirit. And it is this total trust in Jesus Christ and in his word that I ask for you today, through the loving intercession of Mary the Mother of Jesus.

And with this total trust in our Lord and Saviour, let us continue to beseech the Holy Spirit to prolong the new Pentecost and to assist us, as Pastors of the flock, *to guard and teach ever more effectively the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine.*

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your Bishops, and you shall renew the face of the earth!

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