



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC VISIT TO CANADA

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO DISABLED PERSONS

St. John's Memorial Stadium - Newfoundland

Wednesday, 12 September 1984

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

as I visit the Province of Newfoundland, I am pleased to have this special meeting with handicapped and disabled persons. I greet you in the joy and peace of our Risen Saviour. I greet you from all my heart and from all my compassion. I extend greetings too, to your families and friends who are with you today and to all who are close to you through their prayers and concerns. And I promise you to be close to you through my own prayer.

1. In recent years, I have had the opportunity to meet large numbers of handicapped and disabled persons: pilgrims who have to Rome, groups such as this one today whom I have met on my pastoral journeys, and many special groups such as handicapped children on the occasion of their First Communion or Confirmation. I have always welcomed these meetings, for they have afforded me the opportunity of getting to know you better and of coming to understand your struggles and achievements, your sorrows and joys. Such meetings have made me even more aware of how effectively you participate in the life of the community, and of how you must not be relegated to some marginal place in society. In the Church, too, you have an important part to play. You are called to share fully in her life and mission in the world.

2. Each of you, through Baptism, enjoys the gift of new life in Christ and the dignity of an adopted son or daughter of our Father in heaven. In Baptism, you have also been given a share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly functions of our Lord Jesus Christ; and you are called to exercise your role in order to build up Christ's Body, the Church, and to further the Kingdom of God in this

world. Your personal call to holiness and to loving service of others is not separate from your daily life. Rather, your patient acceptance of your disabilities and your joyful hope in the face of difficulties are in their own way a proclamation of the Gospel, for they bear silent witness to the saving power of God at work in your lives.

"Try then", as Saint Paul said, "to imitate God, as children of his that he loves, and follow Christ by loving as he loved you" (*Eph. 5, 1-2*). Seek to accept all things in a spirit of faith and in the light of the Cross. And may you find in the Eucharist and in prayer the strength needed to overcome any obstacle - the liberating power of Christ's love that has conquered the world.

3. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ: be assured that you are never alone. God loves you and has given you a special place in the Church. And the Pope loves you, too, and blesses you with all his heart. And he the Pope invites you to be near to him every day when he celebrates the Holy Eucharist and when he says the Holy Mass offering Christ himself as the victim of the whole world. Your place is near to the suffering and crucified Christ in the victory of the Eucharist. The Pope is also closed to your families and all your dear ones. May Christ fill you with his peace.