



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND CANADA

VISIT TO THE CATHEDRAL OF THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Detroit
Friday, 18 September 1987

Praised be Jesus Christ!
Dear Archbishop Szoka,
Dear Cardinal Dearden,
My Brothers and Sisters,

1. I have been looking forward to this happy moment when in this Cathedral, the mother Church of the Archdiocese of Detroit, I would have the opportunity to express *my love for all of you in Christ*. It is indeed fitting that we greet one another here in this place of worship, in *this church dedicated to the Most Blessed Sacrament*, since it is the Eucharist above all that expresses and brings about our unity with Christ and with one another (Cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, 3. 11). As Saint Paul writes, "Because the loaf of bread is one, we, many though we are, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf" (1Cor. 10, 17). In accordance with the whole life and tradition of the Church, the Eucharist unites the People of God with their bishop in the unity of the Church.

This is the relationship that we are celebrating today: the deep reality of the Eucharist, the local Church and the bishop in the oneness of the universal Church (Cfr. S. Ignatii Antiocheni *Ad Philippenses*).

2. The Second Vatican Council refers to the Church as a *mystery* -a mystery of communion. This means that the Church is more than just a community or tradition with shared beliefs and

practices, more than an organization with moral influence. Using the imagery of Scripture, the Council also speaks of the Church as a sheepfold, a cultivated field, and a building. The Church is Christ's Body, his Bride, and our Mother (Cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, 6-7).

We believe that our communion with Christ and with one another comes into being through *the outpouring of the Holy Spirit*. We believe too that the Holy Spirit makes it fruitful. The Council says that it is he, the Holy Spirit, who bestows upon the Church both "hierarchic and charismatic gifts" (*Ibid.* 4), and by special graces makes all the faithful "fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church" (*Ibid.* 12). Established by Christ as *an instrument of Redemption*, the People of God are "a communion of life, love and truth" and "a most sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race". In this way believers become the light of the world and the salt of the earth (Cfr. *Matth.* 5, 13-14).

Dear brothers and sisters: what great opportunities *your city and its suburbs and rural areas* give to the mission that is yours by baptism: to build up the Body of Christ in unity by means of the gifts you have received (Cfr. *Eph.* 4). Yours is a mission that unfolds amid the *social, cultural, political and economic forces* that shape the life of the great metropolis of Detroit - forces that also raise questions of fundamental importance for the future of humanity. By *personal conversion and holiness*, and by your daily witness to the Gospel in keeping with your state in life, each of you builds up the Body of Christ, and thus contributes to the further *humanization of the family of mankind*, without losing sight of *that Kingdom to come* which is not of this world and for which we yearn. As the Council also tells us, the Holy Spirit "constantly renews the Church and leads her to perfect union with her Spouse. For the Spirit and the Bride both say to Jesus, the Lord: "Come!" (Cfr. *Ap 22,17*; *Lumen Gentium*, 4).

3. This year is the *fiftieth anniversary* of the designation of this building as your cathedral. It has witnessed the great events and-more frequently-the great liturgical celebrations that mark your ecclesial life, as well as the daily worship of a parish community. I am very glad that it is so full this evening, *full of God's glory, full of God's praise*.

Within the context of the communion that we share, I come to you as *the Successor of Saint Peter*, and therefore, as the Council reaffirms, as the Vicar of Christ and pastor of the whole Church, as shepherd of all Christ's flock. This is because in Saint Peter the Lord set up *a lasting and visible source and foundation* of our unity in faith and in communion (Cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, 18. 22). Yet one has only to read about Saint Peter in the Gospels to know that this ministry of his is *a great gift of God's grace* and not the result of any human merit. It is precisely at a moment that reveals Saint Peter's human weakness, that is, the moment when Jesus foretells that Peter will deny him three times, that Jesus also adds: "I have prayed for you that your faith may never fail. You in turn must strengthen your brothers" (*Luc.* 22, 31-34). And so, dear brothers and sisters, relying on the help of God, I come here today *with the desire to strengthen you*, as together we continue our pilgrimage of faith to our heavenly home.

The Communion of Saints to which we belong embraces all those who have gone before us in faith on this pilgrimage. In particular, *Mary the Virgin Mother of God* is constantly with us on our journey. I commend all of you - the clergy, religious and laity of Detroit - to her, the spiritual mother of humanity and the advocate of grace (Cfr. Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Redemptoris Mater*, [35. 47](#)). May she be for all of you "a sign of sure hope and solace" and "a model of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ" (*Lumen Gentium*, 63. 69).

To him, Jesus Christ, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory for ever. Amen.

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