



# The Holy See

---

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA AND ASTURIAS

ON THE OCCASION OF FOURTH WORLD YOUTH DAY **ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II**  
**DURING THE RITE OF THE PILGRIM**

*Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela*

*Saturday, 19 August 1989*

1. *"I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord!'  
Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem!" (Ps 121:1-2).*

*Beloved Brothers in the Episcopate,  
Brothers and Sisters in Christ:*

Like any other pilgrim, I wish to thank the Lord, from whom all good things come, for my being here in Santiago de Compostela. Before this majestic Portico of Glory, which I contemplate for the second time, I feel truly overcome by that emotion enkindled in the hearts of thousands and thousands of pilgrims to Santiago, who down through the centuries have set their eyes on this singular and original stone altar-piece, evocative image of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Before going through the gates of this House and Basilica of St James to venerate his tomb and embrace his statue, I wish to greet those here present, pilgrims also to the tomb of the Apostle.

In the first place I wish to greet fraternally the Pastor of this archdiocese. Archbishop Antonio María Rouco Varela, whom I thank for the touching words he has kindly addressed to me. In the same way I greet his Auxiliary Bishop, Most Rev. Ricardo Blázquez Pérez, also the Cardinals and other bishops present, who have come from other dioceses of Spain and of the world, accompanied by so many pilgrims. As well, I greet the numerous priests and religious.

I also cordially greet the seminarians and young people who, representing all the others and wearing the pilgrim cloak on their shoulders, have accompanied me to the Cathedral.

In a particular way I renew my affectionate greeting to their Majesties, the King and Queen of Spain, who have wished to participate in this liturgy. Through them may I reiterate my warm greeting to the beloved people of Spain.

God willed that as Bishop of Rome, successor of St Peter, a native of oriental Galizia, I might come once again as a pilgrim and be here in this holy place in occidental Galicia, together with young pilgrims from all over the world, to give praise to Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life.

2. *"Jerusalem, built as a city which is bound firmly together, to which the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord" (Ps 121:3-4).*

This pilgrimage takes on an exceptional meaning, since it is the objective of all those taking part in the *World Youth Day*.

In Compostela, spacious home with an open door, the bread of "forgiveness" and grace has been dispensed for centuries upon centuries, without any discrimination whatsoever. From now on it wishes to become a luminous focus of Christian life, a reserve of apostolic energy for new ways of evangelization, through the impulses of the faith of young people, an ever youthful faith.

Many have joined my pilgrimage - many more are also present in spirit - all feeling summoned by the word of Christ: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" (*Jn 14:6*). These same pilgrims transmit to the world of today the seed of hope in a new generation of Christ's disciples, intimately motivated and generously dedicated like the Apostle St James, to the adventure of spreading and giving root to the Good News throughout the world. This evangelization presents itself as the prerogative of generous and creative young people, open to the building of a world without frontiers, in which a civilization of love prevails and whose protagonists must be the People of God spread throughout the world.

3. *"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! May they prosper who love you! Peace be within your walls" (Ps 121:6-7).*

Today, here, before the Portico of Glory, this pilgrimage of the Fourth World Youth Day is like a clear and eloquent sign for the world. Our voices unanimously proclaim our faith and our hope. We want to enkindle a fire of love and truth which will attract the attention of the world, as the mysterious lights seen here did in the past. We wish to shake off the torpor of our world, with a convinced cry of thousands and thousands of young pilgrims who *proclaim Christ* as the Redeemer of mankind, the Centre of history, the Hope of nations and Saviour of peoples.

With them and with all those here present before this Portico, there comes alive before our eyes the great meeting of the pilgrims before the doors of the Basilica of Santiago, described in the

*Codex Callistinus*: "Countless people of all nations go there... There is no language nor dialect which is not heard there... The doors of the Basilica never close, neither by day nor by night... Everyone goes here exclaiming: "*E-ultr-eia* (Forward, yes!) *E-sus-eia* (Up, yes!)". Yes. For a moment Santiago de Compostela is today the meeting tent, the object of pilgrimage, the eloquent sign of the Church, pilgrim and missionary, penitent and wayfarer, praying and evangelizing, which travels all the paths of history "amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God, announcing the cross and death of the Lord until he comes" (cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, 8).

4. *"For brethren and companions' sake I will say, 'Peace be within you!' For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good" (Ps 121: 8-9) .*

In the first place I have come to proclaim to all of you and strengthen your conviction that the Church is the pilgrim People of God. It was not without reason that the first Christians were called *wayfarers* (cfr. *Heb 9.2*). The Church in travelling along the paths of history does not cease to affirm constantly the presence of Jesus of Nazareth, since the mysterious Pilgrim of Emmaus is present on the way of every Christian. He continues to accompany his own, illuminating them with his enlightening Word and nourishing them with his Body and Blood, Bread of eternal life.

Furthermore, it is not surprising that the "Way to Santiago" has been sometimes considered as an example of the Church's pilgrimage on its journey towards the heavenly city. It is a path of prayer and penance, of charity and solidarity; a stretch of the path of life where the faith, becoming history among mankind, also converts culture into something Christian. The churches and abbeys, the hospitals and shelters of the Way to Santiago still speak of the Christian adventure of making pilgrimage in which the faith becomes life, history, culture, charity and works of mercy.

Now, almost on the threshold of A. D. 2000, the Church still wishes to be the travelling companion of humanity; she wishes to accompany us also, at times sorrowful and abandoned as a result of so many infidelities, and always in need of guidance towards salvation amid the dense mist which looms before us, when the awareness of the common Christian vocation is dimmed, even among the very members of the faithful. Allowing themselves to be led by the Spirit, Christians will spread everywhere the values of peace and truth which spring from the Gospel, and which are capable of giving a new meaning and nourishing sap to the world and society of today.

It is necessary then that the memory of a singular Christian past urge all the members of the Church, and I would add, in particular the sons and daughters of noble Spain, to dedicate themselves to an exciting task: that of causing a new Christian humanism to flourish, *one which will give meaning to life at a time when there is so much hunger and thirst for God.*

5. *"Know that the Lord is God!... Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him, bless his name!" (Ps 99:3-4).*

This, then, is the primary reason that has moved me to come to the tomb of the Apostle: to announce from here that Christ is and will continue to be "the Way, the Truth and the Life". In these very evocative words we discover the root of Christ's total revelation to man, to every individual, who must accept him as *Way* if he does not want to go astray, accept him as *Truth* if he does not want to fall into error, and open himself to the outpouring of *Life* - eternal life - which springs from him, if he does not want to let himself be taken in by ideologies and cultures of death and destruction.

Today as yesterday, we need to discover personally, as our Apostle did, that Christ is the Lord, so as to become followers and apostles, witnesses and spreaders of the Gospel, and thus build a more just civilization, a more habitable human society. This is the heritage which St. James has left, not just to Spain and Europe, but to all the peoples of the world. This is also the message which the Pope, the Successor of Peter, wants to entrust to you, so that the Good News of salvation is not converted into a sterile silence, but rather that it finds a favourable response and yields abundant fruits of eternal life.

In the portico of this Cathedral, which you quite rightly call the "Portico of Glory" on account of its architectural beauty and its deep spiritual meaning, we can contemplate the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which appears in an expressive gesture of acceptance of the divine Will. May she, Pilgrim of faith and Virgin of the Way, help all of us to give, with firmness and submission, a definitive "yes" to the *divine plan*, so that there may be in the Church and in the world the true renewing strength of grace, and that all may return to walk again as brothers and sisters along the path which leads to the heavenly mansion. From my heart I implore you not to forget that which is your very own, the historical legacy of St James; giving thanks to God for the past, keep on looking towards the future. Ever faithful to your Catholic faith, professed always in communion with the Successor of Peter, with youthful vigour may you always present to the world the lasting evangelic message of the Apostle.

*"For the Lord is good: his steadfast love endures for ever, and his faithfulness to all generations"*  
(Ps 99:5).

May St James and Our Lady intercede for us before the throne of the Almighty!

Amen.

---

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana