



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
TO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ATTENDING
THE UNIV 2000 CONGRESS**

Monday, 17 April 2000

1. Dear young participants in the UNIV 2000 International University Congress, I greet you all with affection.

Welcome to this meeting, which this year is again taking place shortly before the Easter celebrations. My greeting in this Holy Week of the Jubilee Year has a particular significance: it is a heartfelt invitation to be ever more fully won over by Christ, the Redeemer of man. This is an invitation which, through you, I wish to extend to young people throughout the world. Be deeply convinced that society needs to find in your faithful witness as young Christians an important stimulus for a sound social and spiritual renewal.

2. The theme of the congress invites you to become more clearly aware of your mission as believers at the dawn of the third millennium. It is strikingly put: *The image of man 2,000 years later*. You are invited, as it were, to weigh up 2,000 years of history. In fact, the central event of human history, the coming of Christ on earth, divides the course of history in two: *before and after Christ*. For the Christian, however, the centrality of Jesus is not just a question of measuring the passage of time. The Word made flesh is the true protagonist of history, and the redemption, always at work in the often intricate flux of human events, is history's ultimate hermeneutical key.

We could say that the 2,000 years just ended are not just two millennia *after Christ*, but in a more real sense two millennia *of Christ*. This is the truth expressed in the theme of the Great Jubilee: *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and for ever!"* (Heb 13: 8). Despite human experience, often made up of failure, war, violence and injustice, Christ has conquered evil once and for all, nailing to the Cross the sentence of our condemnation (cf. Col 2: 14). As the Apostle Peter writes: "By his wounds you have been healed" (1 Pt 2: 24). This is why every moment of time belongs

completely to him.

The Holy Year which we are celebrating underlines in a special way the fact that Christ is the centre and the meaning of all that happens, even when, humanly speaking, events seem to elude the rule of his providence. He himself has promised: "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (*Mt 28: 20*). Knowing this, we are encouraged to act always with great confidence, because it is Christ who is at work in us, and because we recognize that in him God is bringing to completion his eternal plan of salvation (cf. *Eph 3: 11*).

3. The "fact" of the redemption, dear young people, opens before us in our daily tasks a horizon full of prospects; even in the contradictions that we often experience at the present time, we know we are constantly advancing towards a sure goal. True progress strives *for Christ*, for that full union with him, holiness, which is also human perfection. St Paul makes this clear in his *Letter to the Ephesians*, in which he writes that the Lord has established everything "for building up the Body of Christ, until we all attain ... to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (*Eph 4: 12-13*). This is the way believers read and interpret history: it is the history of Christ and we live with him and, immersed in him, advance towards him. Bl. Josemaría Escrivá writes: "In the religious order, man continues to be man and God continues to be God. In this field the high point of progress has already been reached: it is Christ, the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end" (*Christ Is Passing By*, 104).

Dear young people of UNIV, be confident in this knowledge: the Christian's effort is never in vain. The Christian never works alone. Do not forget it! Every believer is an instrument of God and with him Christ acts through the power of the Holy Spirit. Let God act in you and through you. And for this to happen, you are well aware of the means you should use: the sacraments, prayer, the practice of the virtues and the sanctification of work, as well as spiritual direction.

You need Christ, but Christ also needs you to make him known to your peers, with whom you share experiences and hopes. The Church entrusts you with the mission of bringing them the light of Christ's truth and his universal message of salvation. Always be ready to think of others, forgetting yourselves in order to bring your brothers and sisters closer to God. In this way you will help build a better and more united world, because the conversion and commitment of one are a seed of salvation for all.

4. I entrust you, dear young people, and your daily efforts to Mary, Queen of Apostles. Pray to her often and imitate her virtues. She will help you to know Jesus more intimately and to follow him with increasing fidelity and joy.

From my heart I warmly wish you and your loved ones a Holy Easter and, as I assure each of you of a remembrance in prayer, I cordially bless you.

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