



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO VARIOUS PILGRIM GROUPS

Saturday, 9 September 2000

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. I am pleased to meet you and joyfully greet you all. This meeting takes place on the day dedicated to the memory of St Peter Claver, a Jesuit priest, an apostle among the deported blacks and a model for those who today are doing their utmost to alleviate the conditions of the suffering. In the spirit of the Jubilee, his example helps us understand one of the commitments that stem from this fundamental event, attention to all who are forced by circumstances to abandon their country and suffer the outrage of those who exploit the poverty of others.

May this spirit, the true spirit of the Jubilee that we are celebrating, imbue the life of our Christian communities and enliven every activity of the diocesan Churches. Two thousand years after his birth, we are celebrating Christ and contemplating him in the mystery of his Incarnation. He appears to us as the true source of salvation for the world and for every human being. Human happenings consist in the history of the encounter of the spiritual poverty of each person with the saving greatness of a God who has boundless love for his creature.

2. The response to this love must be the witness of a life that aims to configure the disciple to his Teacher. Through the individual confession and penitential celebrations that characterize the Jubilee as well as the celebration of the other sacraments, the believer takes a path of configuration to Christ.

This path is symbolically represented by the *pilgrimage* and passage through the Holy Door. Rightly, therefore, "the term Jubilee speaks of joy, not just of an inner joy but a jubilation which is manifested outwardly, for the coming of God is also an outward, visible, audible and tangible event, as St John makes clear (cf. 1 Jn 1: 1)" (*Tertio millennio adveniente*, nn. 16 and 32). There is

also joy in the forgiveness of sins, the joy of conversion.

3. With these sentiments, I cordially welcome you, dear pilgrims from the Diocese of Lucera-Troia, accompanied by your Pastor, Bishop Francesco Zerrillok and also you, pilgrims of the Diocese of Caserta. In passing through the Holy Door, I hope that you will experience the riches that God pours out during the Jubilee celebrations so that your hearts and your communities will be open to new life which is Christ.

Dear brothers and sisters who have come from various parishes and participants in the *Relay Race of Bologna Athletes*, I hope that today's pilgrimage will leave in your hearts effective signs of justice and charity. In the itinerary of the Jubilee you have the opportunity to receive the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation; to nourish yourselves with the Eucharist; and to visit the memorials of the Apostles. May these be intense moments of communion with God. In returning to your communities, you will feel strengthened in your faith and spurred to do good and be charitable in your state of life and in the task to which the Lord calls you.

4. I am glad to greet the group of former students of the French Seminary of Rome. Welcome, dear Brothers in the Episcopate and the priesthood! Your presence this morning is a sign of the gratitude which, young or old, you always feel for your seminary. You can witness to the quality of its human, spiritual, doctrinal and pastoral formation. I warmly encourage those in charge of the seminary to continue their mission which is so important for the life of the Church, in the hope that the French Seminary will remain, especially for the French-speaking world, a privileged place where numerous generations of priests, called to be "heralds of the Gospel" for the new millennium, will continue to flourish. I very willingly impart a most cordial Apostolic Blessing to you all.

5. I am pleased to greet the pilgrims from the Diocese of Saint Catharines in Canada, led by their Vicar General. In this year of the Great Jubilee, you have traveled far to visit these places made holy by the blood of the martyrs. I pray that your days in Rome will give you a new and deeper experience of God's mercy, so that when you return to Canada you will bear more powerful witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of the world. Through you I send affectionate greetings to Bishop O'Mara, Bishop Fulton and all the faithful of Christ in the Diocese. May the Blessed Virgin Mary and St Catherine guard you always, and may Almighty God bless you and your families abundantly with the gift of his peace.

6. Upon everyone I invoke the motherly protection of Mary Most Holy, whose Nativity we celebrated yesterday. May the Mother of the Saviour obtain peace and serenity for all. With this wish, I gladly impart a special Apostolic Blessing to you all.

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