



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE CATHOLIC GUIDE AND  
SCOUT ASSOCIATION OF ITALY (AGESCI),  
TO A GROUP OF BANKERS FROM SPAIN AND LATIN AMERICA  
AND TO THE POLISH CATHOLIC ACTION**

*Saturday, 26 April 2003*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

1. It is a joyful opportunity to receive all of you who have come from Italy, from Spain and from Poland. I thank you for your visit and I greet you affectionately.

I welcome first of all the President, the General Council, the assistant priests, the various leaders and other persons responsible for the *Catholic Guide and Scout Association of Italy (AGESCI)*.

Dear friends, this is not the first time I have had the chance to meet your meritorious Association, and I have always admired the youthful enthusiasm that distinguishes you, as well as your strong desire to faithfully follow the Gospel. Scouting was developed as a *way of learning* with its own method that is fascinating to children, adolescents and young people, and it provides adults the concrete opportunity to become teachers.

Your Association is regarded by the Church with great hope, because she is aware that new generations must be offered the opportunity to have a personal experience of Christ. May the adults called to work with young scouts know that this mission asks them above all to be *witnesses to Jesus Christ* and to communicate by example and word Gospel principles and values. May they therefore be men and women steadfast in the principles of Catholic scouting and, at the same time, active *participants in the life of the Church and civil communities*.

By being faithful to your charism, dear friends, you will develop a dynamic and constructive

relationship with the many lay groups that enrich the Church. You will be able to cooperate with them in order to build a renewed society where peace reigns, founded in justice, liberty, truth and love. These four "pillars" are referred to by my Predecessor Bl. John XXIII in the Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, the fundamental text that your General Council has selected this year as a precious source of reflection.

I would like to conclude by exhorting you to include the daily nourishment of listening to the Word of God, prayer and an intense sacramental life in the fascinating activity of scouting. These are necessary conditions that make existence a gift to others and a sure road to holiness.

2. I am happy to greet you, managers of Bilbao Vizcaya Bank of Argentina (BBVA), who have come from Spain and Latin America on pilgrimage to the Eternal City, and who have desired to visit the Successor of Peter. In welcoming you, I also send my greeting to the other parts of the organizations that you represent and who, through their work, contribute to economic development. When accomplished well, this favours the peaceful co-existence of citizens and permits a life in accordance with human dignity. In this way, one honours man, "the source, the focus and the end of all economic and social life" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 63), and collaborates with God's design.

I wish to recall that the concern for profit, while legitimate, cannot be the principal motive or exclusive basis of entrepreneurial or commercial activity, because *such activity must take into account human factors and is subordinated to the appropriate moral demands of every human action*. I invite you, therefore, to build a true community of persons that seeks to satisfy its economic interests within the framework of the proposals of justice and of solidarity, of responsible and constructive work, and of the promotion of authentic and sincere human relations that are also at the service of society (cf. *Centesimus Annus*, n. 35).

In thanking you for this visit, I encourage you to continue to emphasize *the Christian commitment in the midst of your work, demonstrating by word and deed the teachings of the Church's Magisterium in social matters*. And in this undertaking you will be accompanied by my Apostolic Blessing, which I impart to you with affection and which I extend with pleasure to your families and all the work places that you represent.

3. Dear Brothers and Sisters, representatives of Catholic Action in Poland!

A cordial welcome to all of you. I greet the assistant priest, Mons. Piotr Jarecki, the President and the other members of the Presidency.

You have come to the tombs of the Apostles to give thanks to God for the fruits of the work of Catholic Action in Poland, after your rebirth that took place ten years ago. Although it may not be a long period of time, there is much to be thankful for. I know that Catholic Action in Poland now

possesses a completely reorganized structure that includes the many lay persons who serve the Church with dedication, rediscovering its proper charisms and personal fields of engagement in the work of evangelization. Ten years ago the Polish Bishops were asked to work hard to restore this form of lay apostolate in the Church. Today I can say that they have achieved this task, and all of you members of Catholic Action are a magnificent gift for the entire community of the People of God.

As you know, Catholic Action grew out of religious renewal movements in the second half of the nineteenth century that developed in many Catholic lay circles. Later, during the time of Pope Pius XI, Catholic Action became *an active form of participation by the laity in the hierarchical apostolate of the Church*. The words of St Paul became its programme: "*to unite all things in Christ*" - to renew all in Christ (cf. Eph 1: 10). Thanks to the persevering fulfillment of this programme of renewal of the reality of the Church and of the world "for Christ, with Christ and in Christ", Catholic Action became a school of formation for the laity that was ready to courageously oppose the secularization that was spreading ever more strongly in the twentieth century.

I recall these historical facts in order to show a certain analogy between these beginnings and the beginnings of the renewed Catholic Action in Poland. As before, there is also now at the very sources of your existence a profound desire on the part of the lay faithful to actively participate with the Bishops and the priests in their responsibility for the life of the Church and for the preaching of the Gospel. The purpose of the spiritual programme of activity has not changed: to renew themselves, their own environment, the community of believers, and in the end the entire world to the foundation of the love and power of Christ. Finally, these two beginnings are united by the same challenge that involves the secularization of various sectors of social life.

As witnesses of the Gospel, respond to this challenge in every milieu: in the family, in the workplace, at school or in college. Receive it, knowing that "from the fact of their union with Christ the head flows the laymen's right and duty to be apostles. Inserted as they are in the Mystical Body of Christ by Baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation, it is by the Lord himself that they are assigned to the apostolate" (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, n. 3).

*Duty and right:* This is quite appropriate. You have *the duty and the right* to carry the Gospel, to be witnesses of its reality for modern men and women, and to kindle the faith in those who are far from God. If the Church acknowledges your right and sustains you in doing this work, then remember at the same time that this is your duty. And I also remind you of your Baptism, in which you became apostles of justice by means of the grace of justification, and of your Confirmation, in which the Holy Spirit has made you capable of completing the prophetic work of the Church. It is most important to remember that the power to fulfill this duty, such an exalted task, comes only by placing yourselves in Christ. Catholic action cannot be limited only to the social dimension of the Church. If it is to be the school, the formative community of the laity ready to transform the world by means of the Gospel, it must *shape your own spirituality*. And if you are to transform reality

based on Christ, such a spirituality should be founded on contemplation of his face. As I wrote in the Letter *Novo Millennio Inuente*, "Our witness, however, would be hopelessly inadequate if we ourselves had not first contemplated his face" (n. 16).

"Let us go forward in hope! A new millennium is opening before the Church like a vast ocean upon which we shall venture, relying on the help of Christ. The Son of God, who became incarnate 2,000 years ago out of love for humanity, is at work even today: we need discerning eyes to see this and, above all, a generous heart to become the instruments of his work.... We can count on the power of the same Spirit who was poured out at Pentecost and who impels us still today to start out anew, sustained by the hope "which does not disappoint" (Rom 5: 5)" (n. 58).

So that you walk on this road, the road of contemplation of the face of Christ, the road of formation of the spirituality of Catholic Action founded on this contemplation, the road of the apostolate and of witness, I bless you from the heart.

4. Dear Brothers and Sisters, I assure you all of a remembrance to the Lord, I entrust you, your families and the Communities from which you come to the motherly protection of Mary, and I bless all of you from the heart.