



The Holy See

MEETING OF THE HOLY FATHER
WITH THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF ROME AND LAZIO
PRIOR TO WORLD YOUTH DAY
CELEBRATED IN THE DIOCESES ON PALM SUNDAY

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II

Thursday, 1 April 2004

1. "We wish to see Jesus" ([Jn 12: 21](#)). This is what some "Greeks" who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover asked Philip. When the Teacher was told what they wanted, he realized that *his "hour"* had come! It was the "hour" of the Cross, of obedience to the Father, of sharing the destiny of the grain of wheat which, after falling into the earth, decays and dies to bear fruit!

For Jesus *the hour of his glory* had also come! The "hour" of his passion, death, Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven. The "hour" in which he would offer up his life to take it up again in order to give it to all; the "hour" in which, on the Cross, he would triumph over sin and death for the benefit of all humanity.

We too are called to live that "hour" and to be "honoured" with him by the Father.

Dear young people of Rome and Lazio, I am delighted to meet you. I greet the Cardinal Vicar, who has spoken on your behalf offering his own testimony, and the other Bishops present here. I greet the various artists who are taking part in this meeting and all of you, dear friends, who have gathered in the square or are following us on television.

2. Twenty years ago at the end of the Holy Year of the Redemption, I entrusted to young people *the Cross*, the tree on which Christ was raised from the earth and lived that "hour" for which he had come into the world! Since then this Cross, on pilgrimage from one Youth Day to the next, *has been travelling across the world carried by young people* and proclaims the merciful love of God

who meets the needs of all his creatures, to restore to them the dignity they have lost through sin.

Thanks to you, dear friends, millions of young people, looking at that Cross, have changed their lives and committed themselves to living as authentic Christians.

3. Dear young people: remain united to the Cross! Look at the glory that also awaits you. How many wounds do you feel in your hearts, often caused by the world of adults! As I once again entrust the Cross to you in spirit, I ask you to believe that so many of us have confidence in you, that Christ has confidence in you, and that it is only in him that you will find the salvation you are seeking!

How necessary it is today to *rethink the way of approaching young people* to proclaim the Gospel to them. We must certainly continue the discussion in order to evangelize the world of youth, but with the certainty that Christ also wants to make himself visible today, that he also wants to show his Face today to everyone!

4. Dear young people, do not be afraid to set out on *new paths of total self-giving to the Lord* and of mission; make your own suggestions as to how the Cross should be taken to the world today!

In this regard, I would like to congratulate you on the preparations that are being made in the Diocese of Rome for a *Mission of youth among youth*, in the city's historical centre from the coming 1-10 October, with the important title: "*Jesus in the centre!*". I likewise congratulate the Pontifical Council for the Laity which has recently organized an *International Youth Forum*. I greet you, dear participants in the Forum, and encourage you to work generously to carry out the project of being a more and more effective Christian presence in the university world.

Nourished by the Eucharist, united to the Church and accepting your own crosses, ignite your own store of faith in the world and proclaim divine mercy to everyone!

5. Do not be afraid on this journey to entrust yourselves to Christ. You love the world of course, and that is good, because the world was made for human beings. However, at a certain point in life, it is necessary to make *a radical choice*. Without denying anything that is an expression of God's beauty or of the talents received from him, we must be able to *side with Christ* to witness before all to God's love.

In this regard, I like to remember the great spiritual fascination that the Holy Friar Albert exercised in the story of my vocation! Adam Chmielowski was his name, and he was not a priest. Friar Albert was a very talented and cultured painter. Well, at a certain point in his life he broke with art, because he understood that God was calling him to far more important tasks. He came to Krakow to make himself poor among the poor and devoted himself to serving the outcasts. In him I found special spiritual support and an example as I was distancing myself from literature and the theatre

because of my radical choice of the vocation to the priesthood. Later, one of my greatest joys was to raise him to the honours of the altar, and even before that, to dedicate a play to him: "*Brother of Our God*".

You see, following Christ does not mean spurning the gifts he lavishes upon us, but choosing a path of the radical gift of self to him! If this is what he is asking, then "yes" to this becomes essential! So do not be afraid to entrust yourselves to him. Jesus knows that you must carry his Cross in the world to meet the expectations of so many other young hearts.

6. How different today's young people are from those of 20 years ago! How different is the cultural and social context in which we live! But Christ, no, *he has not changed!* He is the Redeemer of man yesterday, today and for ever!

Put your talents, therefore, at the service of the new evangelization, to weave a new fabric of Christian life!

The Pope is with you! Believe in Jesus, contemplate his Face, the Face of the crucified and risen Lord! That Face which so many long to see, but which is *often veiled* by our lack of enthusiasm for the Gospel and by our sin!

O beloved Jesus, reveal to us your Face of light and forgiveness! Look at us, renew us, send us out!

Too many young people are waiting for you and if they do not see you they will not be able to live their vocation, they will not be able to live life for you and with you, to renew the world beneath your gaze which is turned to the Father and at the same time to our poor humanity.

7. Dear friends, with ever new creativity inspired by the Holy Spirit in prayer, continue together to carry the Cross that I entrusted to you 20 years ago.

The young people of that time have changed just as I have, but your hearts, like mine, go on thirsting for truth, happiness, eternal life, and so they are ever young!

This evening I put my trust in you once again, hope of the Church and of society! Do not be afraid! Take the power of the Cross everywhere, in season and out of season (cf. II *Tm* 4: 2), so that everyone, also thanks to you, may continue to see and believe in the Redeemer of man! Amen.