



The Holy See

12th WORLD YOUTH DAY

FAREWELL ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II

Orly Airport

Sunday, 24 August 1997

Mr. Prime Minister,

1. At the close of my visit in your country on the occasion of World Youth Day, I wish to express my gratitude for the welcome that you have given to me and to the young people from every continent. I appreciate everything that your government has done to ensure the success of the various meetings at which I have presided. All this has also given the young people of the world the opportunity to discover France, land of culture and land of hospitality. I am certain that they will go home strengthened in their lives as men and women, and comforted in their faith. The experience of dialogue and fraternity which they have had in the various regions and in Paris calls them to be committed in their own countries to the service of their brothers and sisters. At the same time, by their testimony and enthusiasm, these young people call upon all our contemporaries to build bonds of understanding and of solidarity.

I extend my thanks to the civil and military authorities, as also to all the members of the security services and the volunteers who have spared no efforts to solve the numerous problems involved in the preparation and in the realization of this gathering. I also thank those who contributed to the dignity and beauty of the liturgical celebrations. To all I express my deep gratitude for their generosity, efficiency and discretion in carrying out the tasks assigned; in this way, each one has contributed to the smooth running and success of these days, which have been unforgettable for me and for the young people who came from all parts of the world. I also cordially greet the leaders of the Christian communities and other religions who have wished to be part of this encounter of the Catholic Church, with the hope that an open and trusting dialogue may continue.

2. Before leaving your country, which I have visited on many occasions since the beginning of my pontificate and also in my youth, I again wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, Archbishop of Paris, and to Bishop Michel Dubost who has had the responsibility of preparing this meeting, to all the French Bishops, to the clergy, to the religious, and to the lay people of the Catholic Church who cooperated in welcoming the young people and accompanied them throughout their spiritual journey. In a special way, I thank the young French people who have participated in the organization of the Twelfth World Youth Day. They have placed themselves at the service of the Church, may they receive many spiritual benefits and continue in their Christian mission according to the vocation of each one!

3. I want to assure all the Catholics of France of my affection and profound spiritual communion; I invite them to be witnesses before their brothers and sisters to their faith and to the love of God, and to work for a society which aspires to peace, harmony and solidarity among all for the common good. Committed to dialogue, they are convinced that within a nation possessing a great tradition of brotherhood and freedom the expression of different religious convictions should permit the development of the cultural wealth and the moral and spiritual genius of the people as a whole. It should also contribute to the quality of public life, in particular by fostering concern for the weakest members of society.

4. I would be grateful if you would express my profound thanks to the President of the Republic. Through your person, Mr. Prime Minister, I greet and thank the members of your Government and all the people of France, offering them my best wishes for peace and prosperity.

Thanking you again, I invoke abundant Divine Blessings upon all your countrymen.

Copyright © Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana