



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION
OF HIS HOLINESS PAUL VI

GAUDETE IN DOMINO

ON CHRISTIAN JOY

May 9, 1975

*To the Episcopate, to the Clergy, and to all the Faithful of the entire world
Venerable brothers and dear sons and daughters; health and the Apostolic Blessing.*

Rejoice in the Lord always; the Lord is near to all who call upon Him in truth!(1)

Dear brothers and sons and daughters in Christ, many times already in the course of this Holy Year we have exhorted the People of God to correspond with joyful enthusiasm to the grace of the Jubilee. As you know, our invitation is essentially an appeal to interior renewal and reconciliation in Christ. It is a question of people's salvation, of their complete happiness. In this time, when throughout the world believers are preparing to celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit, we invite you to implore from Him the gift of joy.

On our own part indeed, the ministry of reconciliation is being exercised in the midst of many contradictions and difficulties,(2) but it is sustained and accompanied in us by the joy of the Holy Spirit. Likewise we are truly able to adopt as our own and address to the universal Church the confidence of the Apostle Paul in his community at Corinth: "...you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together. I have great confidence in you...I am filled with comfort. With all our affliction, I am overjoyed."(3) Yes, it is for us, too, an exigence of love to invite you to share this abounding joy which is a gift of the Holy Spirit.(4)

We have therefore felt it as a happy interior need to address to you in the course of this year of grace, and very fittingly on the occasion of Pentecost, an Apostolic Exhortation whose theme is precisely: Christian joy — joy in the Holy Spirit. It is a sort of hymn to the divine joy that we would like to utter, so that it may awaken an echo in the whole world, and first of all in the Church: may joy be poured out in hearts together with the love of which it is the fruit, by the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.(5) Thus we wish that your voice may be joined with ours, for the spiritual consolation of the Church of God and of all those who are willing to lend their hearts and minds to this celebration.

I. The need for joy in all people's hearts

Christian joy could not be properly praised if one were to remain indifferent to the outward and inward witness that God the Creator renders to Himself in the midst of His creation: "And God saw that it was good."(6) Raising up man in the setting of a universe that is the work of His power, wisdom and love, and even before manifesting Himself personally according to the mode of revelation, God disposes the mind and heart of His creature to meet joy, at the same time as truth. One should therefore be attentive to the appeal that rises from man's heart, from the age of wondering childhood to serene old age, as a presentiment of the divine mystery.

When he awakens to the world, does not man feel, in addition to the natural desire to understand and take possession of it, the desire to find within it his fulfillment and happiness? As everyone knows, there are several degrees of this "happiness." Its most noble expression is joy, or "happiness" in the strict sense, when man, on the level of his higher faculties, finds his peace and satisfaction in the possession of a known and loved good.(7) Thus, man experiences joy when he finds himself in harmony with nature, and especially in the encounter, sharing and communion with other people. All the more does he know spiritual joy or happiness when his spirit enters into possession of God, known and loved as the supreme and immutable good.(8) Poets, artists, thinkers, but also ordinary men and women, simply disposed to a certain inner light, have been able and still are able, in the times before Christ and in our own time and among us, to experience something of the joy of God.

But how can we ignore the additional fact that joy is always imperfect, fragile and threatened? By a strange paradox, the consciousness of that which, beyond all passing pleasure, would constitute true happiness, also includes the certainty that there is no perfect happiness. The experience of finiteness, felt by each generation in its turn, obliges one to acknowledge and to plumb the immense gap that always exists between reality and the desire for the infinite.

This paradox, and this difficulty in attaining joy, seem to us particularly acute today. This is the reason for our message. Technological society has succeeded in multiplying the opportunities for

pleasure, but it has great difficulty in generating joy. For joy comes from another source. It is spiritual. Money, comfort, hygiene and material security are often not lacking; and yet boredom, depression and sadness unhappily remain the lot of many. These feelings sometimes go as far as anguish and despair, which apparent carefreeness, the frenzies of present good fortune and artificial paradises cannot assuage. Do people perhaps feel helpless to dominate industrial progress, to plan society in a human way? Does the future perhaps seem too uncertain, human life too threatened? Or is it not perhaps a matter of loneliness, of an unsatisfied thirst for love and for someone's presence, of an ill-defined emptiness? On the contrary, in many regions and sometimes in our midst, the sum of physical and moral sufferings weighs heavily: so many starving people, so many victims of fruitless combats, so many people torn from their homes! These miseries are perhaps not deeper than those of the past but they have taken on a worldwide dimension. They are better known, reported by the mass media—at least as much as the events of good fortune—and they overwhelm people's minds. Often there seems to be no adequate human solution to them.

This situation nevertheless cannot hinder us from speaking about joy and hoping for joy. It is indeed in the midst of their distress that our fellow men need to know joy, to hear its song. We sympathize profoundly with those over whom poverty and sufferings of every sort cast a veil of sadness. We are thinking in particular of those who are without means, without help, without friendship—those who see their human hopes annihilated. More than ever they are present in our prayers and our affection. We do not wish to overwhelm anyone. On the contrary, we are looking for the remedies capable of bringing light. In our view, these remedies fall into three categories.

People must obviously unite their efforts to secure at least a minimum of relief, well-being, security and justice, necessary for happiness, for the many peoples deprived of them. Such solidarity is already the work of God, it corresponds to Christ's commandment. Already it secures peace, restores hope, strength, communion, and gives access to joy, for the one who gives as for the one who receives, for it is more blessed to give than to receive.⁽⁹⁾ Dear brothers and sons and daughters, how many times do we urge you to prepare a world, one more suitable for living in, to bring about without delay justice and charity for the integral development of all! The conciliar Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* and numerous pontifical documents have indeed insisted on this point. Even though this is not the theme that we are directly touching upon here, effort should be made not to forget this fundamental duty of love of neighbor, without which it would be unbecoming to speak of joy.

There is also needed a patient effort to teach people, or teach them once more, how to savor in a simple way the many human joys that the Creator places in our path: the elating joy of existence and of life; the joy of chaste and sanctified love; the peaceful joy of nature and silence; the sometimes austere joy of work well done; the joy and satisfaction of duty performed; the transparent joy of purity, service and sharing; the demanding joy of sacrifice. The Christian will be able to purify, complete and sublimate these joys; he will not be able to disdain them. Christian joy

presupposes a person capable of natural joy. These natural joys were often used by Christ as a starting point when He proclaimed the kingdom of God.

But the theme of our exhortation is situated on still another level. For the problem seems to be, above all, of the spiritual order. It is man—in his soul—who finds himself without the means to take on himself the sufferings and miseries of our time. These sufferings and miseries crush him all the more to the extent that the meaning of life escapes him, that he is no longer sure of himself or of his transcendent calling and destiny. He has desacralized the universe and now he is desacralizing humanity; he has at times cut the vital link that joined him to God. Hope, and the value of individuals, are no longer sufficiently ensured. God seems to him abstract and useless. Without his being able to express it, God's silence weighs heavily on him. Yes, cold and darkness are first in the heart of the man who knows sadness. One can speak here of the sadness of non-believers, when the human spirit, created in the image and likeness of God, and therefore instinctively oriented towards Him as its sole and supreme good, remains without knowing Him clearly, without loving Him, and therefore without experiencing the happiness, even though imperfect, that is brought by the knowledge of God and by the certainty of having a link with Him that even death cannot break. Who does not recall the words of Saint Augustine: "You have made us for Yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You"?⁽¹⁰⁾ It is therefore by becoming more present to God, by turning away from sin, that man can truly enter into spiritual joy. Without doubt "flesh and blood"⁽¹¹⁾ are incapable of this. But Revelation can open up this possibility and grace can bring about this return. Our intention is precisely to invite you to the sources of Christian joy. And how could we do this, without ourselves becoming attentive to God's plan, listening to the Good News of His love?

II. Announcement of Christian joy in the Old Testament

In essence, Christian joy is the spiritual sharing in the unfathomable joy, both divine and human, which is in the heart of Jesus Christ glorified. As soon as God the Father begins to manifest in history the mystery of His will, according to His purpose which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time,⁽¹²⁾ this joy is mysteriously announced in the midst of the People of God, before its identity has been unveiled.

Thus Abraham, our father, who was set apart for the future accomplishment of the Promise, and who hoped against all hope, receives when his son Isaac is born the prophetic first fruits of this joy.⁽¹³⁾ This joy becomes transfigured through a trial touching death, when this only son is restored to him alive, a prefiguring of the resurrection of the one who was to come: the only Son of God promised for the remaining sacrifice. Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing the Day of Christ, the Day of Salvation: he "saw it and was glad."⁽¹⁴⁾

The joy of salvation then increases and is transmitted throughout the prophetic history of ancient Israel. It persists and is unfailingly reborn in the course of tragic trials due to the culpable infidelities of the chosen people and to the external persecutions which try to detach them from their God. This joy, ever threatened and springing up again, is proper to the people born of Abraham.

It is always a question of an uplifting experience of liberation and restoration (at least foretold), having its origin in the merciful love of God for His beloved people, on whose behalf He accomplishes, by pure grace and miraculous power, the promises of the Covenant. Such is the joy of the Mosaic Passover, which happened as the prefiguring of the eschatological liberation which would be wrought by Jesus Christ in the paschal context of the new and eternal Covenant. It is a question also of the real joy repeatedly hymned by the Psalms—the joy of living with God and for God. It is a question finally and above all of the glorious and supernatural joy, prophesied for the new Jerusalem redeemed from the exile and loved with a mystical love by God Himself.

The ultimate meaning of this unheard-of outpouring of redemptive love will only appear at the time of the new Pasch and new Exodus. At that time the People of God will be led, in the death and resurrection of the Suffering Servant, from this world to the Father, from the figurative Jerusalem of here below to the Jerusalem above: "Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, with no one passing through, I will make you majestic for ever, a joy from age to age.... For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you."(15)

III. Joy according to the New Testament

Through the course of many centuries and in the midst of most terrible trials, these promises wonderfully sustained the mystical hope of ancient Israel. And it is ancient Israel that transmitted them to the Church of Jesus Christ, in such a way that we are indebted to ancient Israel for some of the purest expressions of our hymn of joy. And yet, according to faith and the Christian experience of the Holy Spirit, this peace which is given by God and which spreads out like an overflowing torrent when the time of "consolation"(16) comes, is linked to the coming and presence of Christ.

No one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord. The great joy announced by the angel on Christmas night is truly for all the people,(17) both for the people of Israel then anxiously awaiting a Savior, and for the numberless people made up of all those who, in time to come, would receive its message and strive to live by it. The Blessed Virgin Mary was the first to have received its announcement, from the angel Gabriel, and her Magnificat was already the exultant hymn of all the humble. Whenever we say the rosary, the joyful mysteries thus place us once more before the

inexpressible event which is the center and summit of history: the coming on earth of Emmanuel, God with us. John the Baptist, whose mission is to point Him out to the expectation of Israel, had himself leapt for joy, in His presence, in the womb of his mother.(18) When Jesus begins His ministry, John "rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice."(19)

Let us now pause to contemplate the person of Jesus during His earthly life. In His humanity He had experienced our joys. He has manifestly known, appreciated, and celebrated a whole range of human joys, those simple daily joys within the reach of everyone. The depth of His interior life did not blunt His concrete attitude or His sensitivity. He admires the birds of heaven, the lilies of the field. He immediately grasps God's attitude towards creation at the dawn of history. He willingly extols the joy of the sower and the harvester, the joy of the man who finds a hidden treasure, the joy of the shepherd who recovers his sheep or of the woman who finds her lost coin, the joy of those invited to the feast, the joy of a marriage celebration, the joy of the father who embraces his son returning from a prodigal life, and the joy of the woman who has just brought her child into the world. For Jesus, these joys are real because for Him they are the signs of the spiritual joys of the kingdom of God: the joy of people who enter this kingdom return there or work there, the joy of the Father who welcomes them. And for His part Jesus Himself manifests His satisfaction and His tenderness when He meets children wishing to approach Him, a rich young man who is faithful and wants to do more, friends who open their home to Him, like Martha, Mary and Lazarus. His happiness is above all to see the Word accepted, the possessed delivered, a sinful woman or a publican like Zacchaeus converted, a widow taking from her poverty and giving. He even exults with joy when He states that the little ones have the revelation of the kingdom which remains hidden from the wise and able.(20) Yes, because Christ was "a man like us in all things but sin,"(21) He accepted and experienced affective and spiritual joys, as a gift of God. And He did not rest until "to the poor he proclaimed the good news of salvation...and to those in sorrow, joy."(22) The Gospel of Saint Luke particularly gives witness to this seed of joy. The miracles of Jesus and His words of pardon are so many signs of divine goodness: all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by Him, and gave glory to God.(23) For the Christian as for Jesus, it is a question of living, in thanksgiving to the Father, the human joys, that the Creator gives him.

But it is necessary here below to understand properly the secret of the unfathomable joy which dwells in Jesus and which is special to Him. It is especially the Gospel of Saint John that lifts the veil, by giving us the intimate words of the Son of God made man. If Jesus radiates such peace, such assurance, such happiness, such availability, it is by reason of the inexpressible love by which He knows that He is loved by His Father. When He is baptized on the banks of the Jordan, this love, which is present from the first moment of His Incarnation, is manifested: "You are my Son, the Beloved; my favor rests on you."(24) This certitude is inseparable from the consciousness of Jesus. It is a presence which never leaves Him all alone.(25) It is an intimate knowledge which fills Him: "...the Father knows me and I know the Father."(26) It is an unceasing and total exchange: "All I have is yours and all you have is mine."(27) The Father has given the Son the power to judge, the power to dispose of life. It is a mutual indwelling: "...I am in the Father

and the Father in me...."(28) In return, the Son gives the Father immeasurable love: "...I love the Father.... I am doing exactly what the Father told me."(29) He always does what is pleasing to His Father: it is His food and drink.(30) His availability goes even to the gift of His human life; His confidence goes even to the certitude of taking it up again: "The Father loves me because I lay down my life in order to take it up again."(31) In this sense He rejoices to go to the Father. For Jesus it is not a question of a passing awareness. It is the reverberation in His human consciousness of the love that He has always known as God in the bosom of the Father: "...you loved me before the foundation of the world."(32) Here there is an uncommunicable relationship of love which is identified with His existence as the Son and which is the secret of the life of the Trinity: the Father is seen here as the one, who gives Himself to the Son, without reserve and without ceasing, in a burst of joyful generosity, and the Son is seen as He who gives Himself in the same way to the Father, in a burst of joyful gratitude, in the Holy Spirit.

And the disciples and all those who believe in Christ are called to share this joy. Jesus wishes them to have in themselves His joy in its fullness.(33) "I have made your name known to them and will continue to make it known, so that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and so that I may be in them."(34)

This joy of living in God's love begins here below. It is the joy of the kingdom of God. But it is granted on a steep road which requires a total confidence in the Father and in the Son, and a preference given to the kingdom. The message of Jesus promises above all joy—this demanding joy; and does it not begin with the beatitudes?

"How happy are you who are poor: yours is the kingdom of God. Happy you who are hungry now: you shall be satisfied. Happy you who weep now: you shall laugh."(35)

In a mysterious way, Christ Himself accepts death at the hands of the wicked(36) and death on the cross, in order to eradicate from man's heart the sins of self-sufficiency and to manifest to the Father a complete filial obedience. But the Father has not allowed death to keep Him in its power. The resurrection of Jesus is the seal placed by the Father on the value of His Son's sacrifice: it is the proof of the Father's fidelity, according to the desire expressed by Jesus before He enters into His passion: "Father...glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you."(37) Henceforth, Jesus is living forever in the glory of the Father, and this is why the disciples were confirmed in an ineradicable joy when they saw the Lord on Easter evening.

It remains that, here below, the joy of the kingdom brought to realization can only spring from the simultaneous celebration of the death and resurrection of the Lord. This is the paradox of the Christian condition which sheds particular light on that of the human condition: neither trials nor sufferings have been eliminated from this world, but they take on a new meaning in the certainty of sharing in the redemption wrought by the Lord and of sharing in His glory. This is why the Christian, though subject to the difficulties of human life, is not reduced to groping for the way; nor

does he see in death the end of his hopes. As in fact the prophet foretold: "The people that walked in darkness has seen a great light; on those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone. You have made their gladness greater, you have made their joy increase...."(38) The Easter Exultet sings of a mystery accomplished beyond the hopes of the prophets: in the joyful announcement of the resurrection, even man's suffering finds itself transformed, while the fullness of joy springs from the victory of the Crucified, from His pierced heart and His glorified body. This victory enlightens the darker souls. *Et nox illuminatio mea in deliciis meis.*(39)

Paschal joy is not just that of a possible transfiguration: it is the joy of the new presence of the Risen Christ dispensing to His own the Holy Spirit, so that He may dwell with them. The Holy Spirit is given to the Church as the inexhaustible principle of her joy as the bride of the glorified Christ. He recalls to her mind, through the ministry of grace and truth exercised by the successors of the apostles, the very teaching of the Lord. The Holy Spirit stirs up in the Church divine life and the apostolate. And the Christian knows that this Spirit will never be quenched in the course of history. The source of hope manifested at Pentecost will never be exhausted.

Thus the Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son and is their living mutual love, is henceforth communicated to the People of the New Covenant, and to each soul ready for His secret action. He makes us His dwelling place: *dulcis hospes animae.*(40) Together with Him, man's heart is inhabited by the Father and the Son.(41) The Holy Spirit raises up therein a filial prayer that springs forth from the depths of the soul and is expressed in praise, thanksgiving, reparation and supplication. Then we can experience joy which is properly spiritual, the joy which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.(42) It consists in the human spirit's finding repose and a deep satisfaction in the possession of the Triune God, known by faith and loved with the charity that comes from Him. Such a joy henceforth characterizes all the Christian virtues. The humble human joys in our lives, which are like seeds of a higher reality are transfigured. Here below this joy will always include to a certain extent the painful trial of a woman in travail and a certain apparent abandonment, like that of the orphan: tears and lamentation, while the world parades its gloating satisfaction. But the disciples' sadness, which is according to God and not according to the world, will be promptly changed into a spiritual joy that no one will be able to take away from them.(43)

Such is the situation of Christian existence, and very particularly of the apostolic life. This life, being animated by a zealous love of the Lord and His brethren, is necessarily exercised under the standard of the paschal sacrifice, going through love to death, and through death to life and love. Hence the condition of the Christian, and above all of the apostle, who must become the "model of the flock"(44) and associate himself freely with the Redeemer's passion. The apostolic life thus corresponds to what was described in the Gospel as the law of Christian blessedness, in continuity with the destiny of the prophets: "Happy are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven; this is how they persecuted the prophets before you."(45)

Unfortunately, in our century which is so threatened by the illusion of false happiness, we do not lack opportunities of noting the psychic inability of man to accept "the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned."(46) The world—that world which is unfitted to receive the Spirit of Truth, whom it neither sees nor knows—only sees one side of things. It considers only the affliction and poverty of the disciple, while the latter always remains, in his inmost being, in joy, because he is in communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

IV. Joy in the hearts of the saints

Dear brothers and sons and daughters, such is the joyful hope drawn from the very sources of God's Word. For twenty centuries, this source of joy has not ceased to spring up in the Church, and especially in the hearts of the saints. We must now recall some echoes of this spiritual experience; according to the diversity of charisms and particular vocations, it illustrates the mystery of Christian joy.

In the first rank is the Virgin Mary, full of grace, the Mother of the Savior. She, accepting the announcement from on high, the Servant of the Lord, Spouse of the Spirit and Mother of the Eternal Son, manifests her joy before her cousin Elizabeth who celebrates her faith: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior...henceforth all generations will call me blessed."(47) She has grasped, better than all other creatures, that God accomplishes wonderful things: His name is holy, He shows His mercy, He raises up the humble, He is faithful to His promises. Not that the apparent course of her life in any way departs from the ordinary, but she meditates on the least signs of God, pondering them in her heart. Not that she is in any way spared sufferings: she stands, the mother of sorrows, at the foot of the cross, associated in an eminent way with the sacrifice of the innocent Servant. But she is also open in an unlimited degree to the joy of the resurrection; and she is also taken up, body and soul, into the glory of heaven. The first of the redeemed, immaculate from the moment of her conception, the incomparable dwelling-place of the Spirit, the pure abode of the Redeemer of mankind, she is at the same time the beloved Daughter of God and, in Christ, the Mother of all. She is the perfect model of the Church both on earth and in glory. What a marvelous echo the prophetic words about the new Jerusalem find in her wonderful existence as the Virgin of Israel: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garment of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels."(48) With Christ, she sums up in herself all joys; she lives the perfect joy promised to the Church: *Mater plena sanctae laetitiae*. And it is with good reason that her children on earth, turning to her who is the mother of hope and of grace, invoke her as the cause of their joy: *Causa nostrae laetitiae*.

After Mary, we find the expression of the purest and most burning joy—where the cross of Jesus is embraced with the most faithful love—among the martyrs, in whom, in the very midst of their torment, the Holy Spirit inspires an impassioned longing for the coming of the Spouse. Dying and seeing heaven open, Saint Stephen is but the first of the innumerable witnesses of Christ. How many there are, in our day still and in many countries, who, risking everything for Christ, could declare with the martyr Ignatius of Antioch: "It is in the fullness of life that I write to you, desiring to die. My earthly desire has been crucified, and there is no more fire in me to love matter. There is only in me a living water that murmurs and says: 'Come to the Father.'"(49)

In the same way the strength of the Church, the certainty of her victory and her happiness in the celebration of the martyrs' combat come from the fact that she contemplates in them the glorious fruitfulness of the cross. This is the reason why our predecessor Saint Leo the Great extolling from this Roman See the martyrdom of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, exclaims: "Precious in the eyes of God is the death of His saints, and no form of cruelty can destroy a religion founded on the mystery of the cross of Christ. The Church is not diminished but increased by persecutions. And the Lord's field is unceasingly clothed with a richer harvest, when the grains which fell alone are multiplied in their rebirth."(50)

Nevertheless, there are many dwellings in the Father's house, and for those whose heart is consumed by the Holy Spirit many ways of dying to themselves and of coming to the holy joy of the resurrection. The shedding of blood is not the only path. Yet the combat for the kingdom necessarily includes passing through a passion of love, which the spiritual masters have spoken of in excellent ways. And here their interior experiences meet, in the very diversity of mystical traditions, in the East as in the West. They attest to the same path for the soul: *per crucem ad lucem*, and from this world to the Father, in the life-giving breath of the Spirit.

Each of these spiritual masters has left us a message of joy. The Fathers of the East abound in testimonies about this joy in the Holy Spirit. Origen, for example, often describes the joy of the one who has intimate knowledge of Jesus: "His soul is then inundated with joy, like that of the old Simeon. In the temple which is the Church he embraces Jesus in his arms. He enjoys the plenitude of salvation, holding Him in whom God reconciles the world to Himself."(51) In the Middle Ages, among many others, a master of spirituality in the East, Nicholas Cabasilas, endeavors to show how the love of God for Himself procures the maximum of joy.(52) In the West, it is sufficient to cite the names of some of those who have taught the way to holiness and joy: St. Augustine, St. Bernard, St. Dominic, St. Ignatius Loyola, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Francis de Sales and St. John Bosco.

We would like to evoke more especially three figures that are still very attractive today for the Christian people as a whole. First of all, the poor man of Assisi, in whose footsteps numbers of Holy Year pilgrims are endeavoring to follow. Having left everything for the Lord, St. Francis rediscovers through holy poverty something, so to speak, of the original blessedness, when the

world came forth intact from the hands of the Creator. In the most extreme abnegation, half blind, he was able to chant the unforgettable Canticle of the Creatures, the praise of our brother the sun, of all nature, which had become transparent for him and like a pure mirror of God's glory. He could even express joy at the arrival of "our sister bodily death": "Blessed are those who will be conformed to your most Holy will...."

In more recent times, St. Therese of Lisieux shows us the courageous way of abandonment into the hands of God to whom she entrusts her littleness. And yet it is not that she has no experience of the feeling of God's absence, a feeling which our century is harshly experiencing; "Sometimes it seems that the little bird (to which she compared herself) cannot believe that anything else exists except the clouds that envelop it.... This is the moment of perfect joy for the poor, weak little thing.... What happiness for it to remain there nevertheless, and to gaze at the invisible light that hides from its faith."(53)

And then how could one fail to recall the luminous figure and example for our generation of Blessed Maximilian Kolbe, the authentic disciple of St. Francis? In the most tragic trials which have bloodied our age, he offered himself voluntarily to death in order to save an unknown brother, and the witnesses report that his interior peace, serenity and joy somehow transformed the place of suffering—which was usually like an image of hell—into the antechamber of eternal life, both for his unfortunate companions and for himself.

In the life of the Church's sons and daughters, this sharing in the joy of the Lord cannot be dissociated from the celebration of the Eucharistic mystery, at which they are nourished with His Body and Blood. For being thus sustained like travelers, on the road to eternity, they already receive sacramentally the first fruits of eschatological joy.

Situated in this perspective, the vast and profound joy infused already here below into the hearts of the truly faithful cannot but appear as "self-multiplying," just like the life and love of which it is a happy manifestation. Joy is the result of a human-divine communion, and aspires to a communion ever more universal. In no way can it encourage the person who enjoys it to have an attitude of preoccupation with self. Joy gives the heart a catholic openness to the world of people, at the same time that it wounds the heart with a longing for eternal bliss. Among the fervent, joy deepens their awareness of being exiles, but it guards them from the temptation to desert the place of their combat for the coming of the kingdom. It makes them hasten actively towards the heavenly consummation of the nuptials of the Lamb. It is peacefully stretched between the moment of earthly toil and the peace of the eternal dwelling, in conformity with the Spirit's force of attraction: "If then, already here below, because we have received this pledge (of the Spirit of sonship), we exclaim 'Abba, Father!' what will it be like when we shall be raised and see Him face to face? When all the members, like an immense flood, will burst forth in a hymn of exultation, glorifying Him who has raised them from the dead and given them eternal life? For if simple pledges, enveloping man on all sides, already make him exclaim 'Abba, Father,' what will the full grace of

the Spirit not do when it is given to men by God? It will make us like Him and will accomplish the will of the Father, for it will make man to the image and likeness of God."(54) Already here below the saints give us a foretaste of this likeness.

V. A joy for all the people

In listening to this harmony of the many voices of the saints, have we forgotten the present condition of human society, apparently so little oriented towards things supernatural? Have we overestimated the spiritual aspirations of the Christians of the present time? Have we limited our exhortation to a small number of wise and learned people? We cannot forget that the Gospel with its so simple splendor and complete content was first announced to the poor and the humble.

If we have evoked this bright horizon of Christian joy it is in no way with the idea of discouraging any of you, dear brothers and sons and daughters, who feel your heart divided when God's call reaches you. Quite the contrary; we feel that our joy, like yours, will only be complete if we look together, with full confidence, to Him "who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection; for the sake of the joy which was still in the future, he endured the cross, disregarding the shamefulness of it, and from now on has taken his place at the right of God's throne. Think of the way he stood such opposition from sinners and then you will not give up for want of courage."(55)

The invitation given by God the Father to share fully in the joy of Abraham, in the everlasting feast of the nuptials of the Lamb, is a universal convocation. Everyone, provided he makes himself attentive and available, can perceive this invitation in the depths of his heart, especially in this Holy Year when the Church opens more abundantly to all the riches of God's mercy. "The promise that was made is for you and your children, and for all those who are far away, for all those whom the Lord our God will call to himself."(56)

We cannot think of the People of God in an abstract way. Our gaze rests first of all on the world of children. As long as they find in the love of those close to them the security which they need, they have a capacity for welcoming, for wonderment, for confidence and for spontaneous giving. They are apt subjects for Gospel joy. Whoever wishes to enter the kingdom of heaven, Jesus tells us, must first study children.(57)

We include also all those who are deeply involved in family, professional and social responsibility. The burden of their charges, in a fast-moving world, too often prevents them from enjoying daily joys. Nevertheless such joys do exist. The Holy Spirit wants to help these people rediscover these joys, to purify them, to share them.

We think of the world of the suffering, we think of all those who have reached the evening of their

lives. God's joy is knocking at the door of their physical and moral sufferings, not indeed with irony, but to achieve therein His paradoxical work of transfiguration.

Our heart and mind turn also to all those who live beyond the visible sphere of the People of God. By bringing their lives into harmony with the innermost appeal of their conscience, which is the echo of God's voice, they are on the road to joy.

But the People of God cannot go forward without guides. These are the pastors, the theologians, the spiritual directors, the priests and those who collaborate with them in the animation of Christian communities. Their mission is to help their brethren to take the paths of Gospel joy, in the midst of the realities which make up their lives and from which they cannot flee.

Yes, it is the immense love of God which is summoning towards the heavenly City those who are coming in this Holy Year from the different points of the compass, whether they be near or still far off. And because all those who are summoned—all of us in fact—remain to some extent sinners, we must today cease to harden our hearts, in order to listen to the voice of the Lord and accept the offer of the great pardon, as Jeremiah announced it: "I will cleanse them of every sin they have committed against me; the sins by which they offended me and apostatized from me, all these I will forgive. And Jerusalem shall be my theme of joy, my honor and my boast before all the nations of the earth."(58) And just as this promise of pardon, and many others, find their definite meaning in the redeeming sacrifice of Jesus, the Suffering Servant, it is He, and He alone, who can say to us, in this crucial moment of mankind's life: "Repent, and believe the Good News."(59) The Lord wishes above all to make us understand that the conversion demanded of us is in no way a backward step, as sin is. It is rather a setting out, an advancement in true freedom and in joy. It is the response to an invitation coming from Him—an invitation that is loving, respectful and pressing at the same time: "Come to me, all you who labor and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls!"(60)

In fact, what burden is more crushing than that of sin? What distress more lonely than that of the prodigal son, described by the evangelist Saint Luke? On the other hand, what meeting is more overwhelming than that of the Father, patient and merciful, and the son returned to life? "There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one repentant sinner than over ninety-nine virtuous men who have no need of repentance."(61) And who is without sin, apart from Christ and His Immaculate Mother? Thus, by its invitation to return to the Father by repentance, the Holy Year—a promise of jubilation for all the people—is also a call to rediscover the meaning and the practice of the sacrament of Reconciliation. Following the line of the best spiritual tradition, we remind the faithful and their pastors that the confessing of grave sins is necessary and that frequent confession remains a privileged source of holiness, peace and joy.

VI. Joy and hope in the hearts of the young

Without detracting from the fervor of our message to the whole of the People of God, we wish to take the time to address ourselves at greater length to the world of the young. We do so with special hope.

If in fact the Church, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, in a certain sense constitutes the true youth of the world, as long as she remains faithful to her being and to her mission, how could she fail spontaneously and preferably to recognize herself in those who feel themselves to be the bearers of life and hope and of the task of ensuring that there will be a tomorrow for the history of today? And vice versa, how can those who in every period of this history more intensely experience in themselves the impetus of life, the expectation of hope for the future, the need for true renewal, not be secretly in harmony with a Church animated by the Spirit of Christ? How could they not expect from the Church the revelation of her secret of permanent youth, and therefore the joy of their own youth?

We think that in fact such a correspondence exists, not always visibly, but certainly deep down, despite many accidental contradictions. This is why, in this Exhortation on Christian Joy, our mind and heart urge us to turn very decisively to the young people of today. We do so in the name of Christ and of His Church which, despite her human failings, He wishes to be "glorious, with no speck or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and faultless."(62)

In doing so we are not giving way to a sentimental cult of youth. Considered only from the viewpoint of age, youth is a short-lived thing. The excessive attention that is given to it quickly becomes nostalgic or ridiculous. But this is not true in what concerns the spiritual meaning of this moment of grace: youth lived in the proper way. What catches our attention is essentially the correspondence between the soaring impulse of a being which is naturally receptive to the appeals and demands of his high destiny as a person, and the dynamism of the Holy Spirit, from whom the Church ceaselessly receives her own youthfulness, her substantial fidelity to herself and, at the heart of this faithfulness, her living creativity. It is a correspondence which is transitory and threatened, yes, but still full of meaning and rich in generous promises. From the encounter between the human being which, for a few decisive years, has youth at his command, and the Church in her permanent spiritual youthfulness, there necessarily arises, on both sides, a joy of high quality and a fruitful promise.

The Church, as the People of God on pilgrimage towards the future kingdom, must be able to perpetuate herself, and therefore renew herself down succeeding human generations. For her this is a condition for fruitfulness, and even simply for life itself. It is therefore necessary that at each moment of her history the rising generation should in some way fulfill the hope of the preceding generations, the very hope of the Church, which is to transmit without end the gift of God, the Truth and the Life. This is why in every generation young Christians justly ratify, with full

consciousness and unconditionally, the covenant entered into by them in the sacrament of Baptism and reinforced in the sacrament of Confirmation.

In this regard our age of profound change is not without grave difficulties for the Church. We who have, together with the whole College of Bishops, "anxiety for all the churches"(63) and preoccupation for their immediate future, are well aware of this. But at the same time, being supported by faith and hope which does not disappoint us,(64) we are sure that grace will not fail the Christian people, and we hope that they themselves will not fail grace, or reject—as some today are gravely tempted to do—the inheritance of truth and holiness handed down to this decisive moment in the history of the world. And this is the point—we think that we have every reason to have confidence in Christian youth: youth will not fail the Church if within the Church there are enough older people able to understand it, to love it, to guide it and to open up to it a future by passing on to it with complete fidelity the Truth which endures. Then new workers, resolute and fervent, will in their turn enter upon spiritual and apostolic work in the fields which are white and ready for the harvest. Then the sower and the reaper will share the same joy of the kingdom.(65)

It seems to us in fact that the present world crisis, which is marked by a great confusion among many young people, partly betrays a senile and definitely out-of-date aspect of a commercial, hedonistic and materialistic civilization which is still trying to present itself as the gateway to the future. Even in its very excesses, the instinctive reaction of many young people against this illusion takes on a certain importance. This generation is waiting for something else. Having suddenly been deprived of protective traditions, then bitterly deceived by the vanity and spiritual vacuum of false novelties, atheistic ideologies and certain deleterious forms of mysticism, will not this generation come to discover or rediscover the sure and unalterable newness of the divine mystery revealed in Jesus Christ? Has not He, in the splendid words of Saint Irenaeus, "brought all newness by bringing His own person"?(66)

And this is why we are pleased to dedicate more expressly to you, the young Christians of the present day, the promise of the Church of tomorrow, this celebration of spiritual joy. We cordially urge you to be attentive to the inner appeals which come to you. We urge you to raise up your eyes, your hearts, your fresh energies, to the heights, to accept the effort of the soul's yearnings. And we wish to give you this assurance: however debilitating the prejudice diffused everywhere today, of the human spirit's inability to discover permanent and life-giving Truth, equally profound and liberating is the joy of divine Truth finally recognized in the Church: *gaudium de Veritate*.(67) This is the joy which is offered to you. It gives itself to those who love it enough to seek it tenaciously. By disposing yourselves to accept it and to communicate it, you will ensure together your own fulfillment in Christ and the next historical stage of the People of God.

VII. *The joy of the pilgrim in this Holy Year*

The Holy Year with its pilgrimage forms a natural part in this journey of the whole People of God. The grace of the Jubilee is in fact obtained at the cost of setting out and of a journey towards God, in faith, hope and love. By varying the means and the times of this Jubilee, we have wished to make it easier for everyone. The essential element remains the inner decision to respond to the call of the Spirit, in a personal manner, as a disciple of Jesus, as a child of the Catholic and Apostolic Church and according to the intention of this Church. The remainder is in the order of signs and means. Yes, the desired pilgrimage is, for the People of God as a whole, and for each individual within it, a movement, a Passover, that is to say, a journey to the inner place where the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit welcome one into their own intimacy and divine unity: "If anyone loves me...my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him."(68) To reach this presence always presupposes a deepening of true knowledge of oneself, as a creature and as a child of God.

Was it not an inner renewal of this kind that the recent Council fundamentally desired?(69) Assuredly we have here a work of the Spirit, a gift of Pentecost. One must also recognize a prophetic intuition on the part of our predecessor John XXIII, who envisaged a kind of new Pentecost as a fruit of the Council.(70) We too have wished to place ourself in the same perspective and in the same attitude of expectation. Not that Pentecost has ever ceased to be an actuality during the whole history of the Church, but so great are the needs and the perils of the present age, so vast the horizon of mankind drawn towards world coexistence and powerless to achieve it, that there is no salvation for it except in a new outpouring of the gift of God. Let Him then come, the Creating Spirit, to renew the face of the earth! In this Holy Year, we have invited you to make, either materially or in spirit and intention, a pilgrimage to Rome, that is, to the heart of the Catholic Church. But obviously Rome does not constitute the goal of our pilgrimage in time. No holy city here below constitutes this goal. This goal is hidden beyond this world, in the heart of God's mystery which is still invisible to us. For it is in faith that we journey, not in clear vision, and what we shall be has not yet been manifested. The New Jerusalem of which we are already citizens and sons and daughters,(71) comes down from above, from God. Of this only lasting city we have not yet contemplated the splendor, except as in a mirror and in a confused way, by holding fast to the prophetic word. But already we are its citizens, or we are invited to become so; every spiritual pilgrimage receives its interior meaning from this ultimate destination.

And so it was with the Jerusalem praised by the psalmists. Jesus Himself and Mary His Mother sang on earth as they went up to Jerusalem the canticles of Zion: "perfection of beauty," "joy to the whole world."(72) But henceforth it is from Christ that the Jerusalem above receives its attraction, and it is towards Him that we are making our inner journey.

And so it is with Rome where the holy Apostles Peter and Paul gave with their blood their final witness. The vocation of Rome is of apostolic origin, and the ministry which it is our lot to exercise

here is a service for the benefit of the entire Church and of mankind. But it is an irreplaceable service, because it has pleased the Wisdom of God to place the Rome of Peter and Paul, so to speak, on the road that leads to the eternal City, by the fact that Wisdom chose to confide to Peter—who unifies in himself the College of Bishops—the keys of the kingdom of heaven. What remains here, not through the effect of man's will but through the free and merciful benevolence of the Father and the son and the Holy Spirit, is the *soliditas Petri*, such as our predecessor Saint Leo the Great extolled in unforgettable terms: "Saint Peter does not cease to preside over his See, and preserves an endless sharing with the Sovereign Priest. The firmness that he received from the Rock which is Christ, he himself, having become the Rock, transmits it equally to his successors too; and wherever there appears a certain firmness, there is manifested without doubt the strength of the Pastor.... Thus there is, in full vigor and life, in the Prince of the Apostles, this love of God and of men which has been daunted neither by the confinement of prison, nor chains, nor the pressures of the crowd nor the threats of kings; and the same is true of his invincible faith, which has not wavered in the combat or grown lukewarm in victory."(73)

It is always our wish, but still more in this Catholic celebration of the Holy Year, that you may experience with us, both in Rome and in every Church conscious of the duty of being in harmony with the authentic tradition preserved in Rome,(74) "how good, how delightful it is for all to live together like brothers."(75)

A common joy, truly supernatural, a gift of the Spirit of unity and love, which is not possible in truth except where the preaching of the faith is accepted in its entirety, according to the apostolic norm. For then although this faith "is spread throughout the world the Catholic Church guards it carefully, as if it dwelt in a single home, and she believes it unanimously, as if it had but a single soul and a single heart; and in perfect accord she preaches it, teaches it and transmits it, as though it had only one mouth."(76)

This "single home," this single "heart" and "soul," this "one mouth" are indispensable to the Church and to humanity in its entirety, so that there may be raised permanently here below, in unison with the Jerusalem above, the new canticle, the hymn of divine joy. And this is the reason why we ourselves must render witness humbly, patiently and perseveringly—even though it be amid the incomprehension of many—to the charge received from the Lord, that of leading the flock and of confirming our brethren.(77) But in how many ways it is our lot to be in our turn comforted by the very thought of you all, in order to accomplish our apostolic mission for the service of the universal Church and the glory of God the Father!

Conclusion

In the middle of this Holy Year we have considered it fidelity to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit to ask Christians thus to return to the sources of joy.

Beloved brethren and sons and daughters, is it not normal that joy should dwell in us, when our hearts contemplate or rediscover, in faith, the fundamental and simple reasons for joy? God has so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son; through His Spirit, God's presence does not cease to enfold us with His tenderness and to fill us with His life; and we are journeying towards the blessed transfiguration of our life in the path of the resurrection of Jesus. Yes, it would be very strange if this Good News, which evokes the alleluia of the Church, did not give us the look of those who are saved. The joy of being Christian, of being united with the Church, of being "in Christ," and in the state of grace with God, is truly able to fill the human heart. Is it not this profound exultation that gives an overwhelming accent to the Memorial of Pascal: "Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy"? And near to us, how many writers there are who know how to express in a new form—we are thinking, for example, of Georges Bernanos—this evangelical joy of the humble which shines forth everywhere in the world and which speaks of God's silence!

Joy always springs from a certain outlook on man and on God. "When your eye is sound, your whole body too is filled with light."(78) We are touching here on the original and inalienable dimension of the human person: his vocation to happiness always passes through the channels of knowledge and love, of contemplation and action. May you attain this good quality which is in your brother's soul, and this divine presence so close to the human heart!

Let the agitated members of various groups therefore reject the excesses of systematic and destructive criticism! Without departing from a realistic viewpoint, let Christian communities become centers of optimism where all the members resolutely endeavor to perceive the positive aspect of people and events. "Love does not rejoice in what is wrong but rejoices with the truth. There is no limit to love's forbearance, to its trust, its hope, its power to endure."(79)

The attainment of such an outlook is not just a matter of psychology. It is also a fruit of the Holy Spirit. This Spirit, who dwells fully in the person of Jesus, made Him during His earthly life so alert to the joys of daily life, so tactful and persuasive for putting sinners back on the road to a new youth of heart and mind! It is this same Spirit who animated the Blessed Virgin and each of the saints. It is this same Spirit who still today gives to so many Christians the joy of living day by day their particular vocation, in the peace and hope which surpass setbacks and sufferings. It is the Spirit of Pentecost who today leads very many followers of Christ along the paths of prayer, in the cheerfulness of filial praise, towards the humble and joyous service of the disinherited and of those on the margins of society. For joy cannot be dissociated from sharing. In God Himself, all is joy because all is giving.

This positive outlook on people and things, the fruit of an enlightened human spirit and the fruit of the Holy Spirit, finds in Christians a privileged place of replenishment: the celebration of the

Paschal Mystery of Jesus. In His passion, death and resurrection, Christ summarizes the history of each man and of all men, with their weight of sufferings and sins, with their capacities for progress and holiness. This is why our last word in this exhortation is a pressing appeal to all the leaders and animators of the Christian communities: let them not be afraid to insist time and time again on the need for baptized Christians to be faithful to the Sunday celebration, in joy, of the Eucharist. How could they neglect this encounter, this banquet which Christ prepares for us in His love? Let participation in this celebration be at the same time very dignified and festive! It is the crucified and glorious Christ who passes among His disciples to bring them together into the renewal of His resurrection. This is the culmination here below of the alliance of love between God and His people: the sign and source of Christian joy, the preparation for the eternal feast.

May the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit draw you to it! And on our part we bless you with all our heart.

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on May 9, 1975, the twelfth year of our Pontificate.

PAUL VI

NOTES

1. Cf. Phil. 4:4-5; Ps. 145:18.

2. Cf. Apostolic Exhortation, *Paterna cum benevolentia*, A.A.S. 67 (1975), pp. 5-23.

3. 2 Cor. 7:3-4.

4. Cf. Gal. 5:22.

5. Cf. Rom. 5:5.

6. Gn. 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31.

7. Cf. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 31, a. 3.

8. Cf. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *ibid.*, II-II, q. 28, aa. 1, 4.

9. Cf. Acts 20:35.

10. Cf. Saint Augustine, Confessions, Book I, 1: CSEL, 33, p. 1.
11. Cf. Mt. 16:17.
12. Cf. Eph. 1:9-10.
13. Cf. Gn. 21:1-7; Rom. 4:18.
14. Jn. 8:56.
15. Is. 60:15; 62:3; Gal. 4:27; Rv. 21:1-4.
16. Cf. Is. 40:1; 66:13.
17. Cf. Lk. 2:10.
18. Cf. Lk. 1:44.
19. Jn. 3:29.
20. Cf. Lk. 10:21.
21. Eucharistic Prayer IV; cf. Heb. 4:15.
22. Ibid.; Lk. 4:18.
23. Cf. Lk. 13:17.
24. Lk. 3:22.
25. Cf. Jn. 16:32.
26. Jn. 10:15.
27. Jn. 17:10.
28. Jn. 14:10.
29. Jn. 14:31.
30. Cf. Jn. 8:29; 4:34.

31. Jn. 10:17.

32. Jn. 17:24

33. Cf. Jn. 17:13.

34. Jn. 17:26.

35. Lk. 6:20-21.

36. Cf. Acts 2:23.

37. Jn. 17:1.

38. Is. 9:1-2.

39. Praeconium Paschale.

40. Sequence of the Solemnity of Pentecost.

41. Cf. Jn. 14:23.

42. Cf. Rom. 14:17; Gal. 5:22.

43. Cf. Jn. 16:20-22; 2 Cor. 1:4, 7:46.

44. 1 Pt. 5:3.

45. Mt. 5:11-12.

46. 1 Cor. 2:14.

47. Lk. 1:46-48.

48. Is. 61:10.

49. Saint Ignatius, *Epistula ad Romanos*, VII, a *Patres Apostolici*, ed. F. S. Funk, I, Tübingen, 1901, p. 261; cf. Jn. 4:10; 7:38; 14:12.

50. Saint Leo the Great, *Sermo LXXXII*, In *Natali apostolorum Petri et Pauli*, VI; PL 54, 426; cf. Jn. 12:24.

51. Origen, In Lucam XV Hom.: PG 13, 1838-1839.
52. Cf. N. Cabasilas, De vita in Christo, VII: PG 150, 703-715.
53. Letter 175. Manuscrits autobiographiques, Lisieux. 1956, p. 52.
54. Saint Irenaeus, Adversus Haereses, V, 8, 1: PG 7, 1142.
55. Heb. 12:2-3.
56. Acts 2:39.
57. Cf. Mk. 10:14-15.
58. Jer. 33:8-9.
59. Mk. 1:15.
60. Mt. 11:28-29.
61. Lk. 15:17.
62. Eph. 5:27.
63. 2 Cor. 11:28.
64. Cf. Rom. 5:5.
65. Cf. Jn. 4:35-36.
66. Saint Irenaeus, Adversus Haereses, IV, 34, 1: PG 7, 1083.
67. Saint Augustine, Confessions, Book X, 23: CSEL, 33, p. 252.
68. Jn. 14:23.
69. Cf. Paul VI, Address for the opening of the Second Session of the Council, part 1, September 29, 1963: A.A.S. 55 (1963), pp. 845ff.: Encyclical Ecclesiam Suam, A.A.S. 56 (1964), 612, 614-618.
70. John XXIII, Address for the closing of the First Session, part 3, December 8, 1962: A.A.S. 55 (1963), pp. 38ff.

71. Cf. Gal. 4:26.

72. Ps. 50:2; 48:3.

73. Saint Leo the Great, Sermo XCVI, De natali ipsius sermo V in anniversario assumptionis suae ad Pontificatum, 4: PL 54, 155-156.

74. Cf. Saint Irenaeus, Adversus Haereses, III, 3, 2: PG 7, 848- 849.

75. Ps. 133:1.

76. Saint Irenaeus, Adversus Haereses, I, 10, 2: PG 7, 551.

77. Cf. Lk 22:32.

78. Lk. 11:34.

79. 1 Cor. 13:6-7.