



The Holy See

GENERAL AUDIENCE OF JOHN PAUL II

Wednesday, 7 May 2003

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. Today I would like to reflect on the *apostolic journey* which I was able to make in *Spain* last Saturday and Sunday and whose theme was: "*Seréis mis testigos - You will be my witnesses*".

I thank the Lord for allowing me to visit that noble and beloved nation for the fifth time, and I renew the expression of my cordial gratitude to the Cardinal Archbishop of Madrid, to the Pastors and the entire Church of Spain, to Their Majesties the King and Queen and also to the Head of Government and the other Authorities who welcomed me with such affectionate attention.

From the moment I arrived, I was able to express the esteem the Successor of Peter has for that portion of the people of God which - for almost 2,000 years - has been a pilgrim in the land of Iberia and has played *an important role in the evangelization* of Europe and of the world. At the same time, I wanted to express my appreciation for the social progress the country has made, inviting it to continue to base its development on the *authentic and perennial values* that constitute *the precious heritage* of the entire European continent.

2. The two *principal moments* of my pastoral pilgrimage were the big meeting with young people on Saturday afternoon, and the holy Mass for the canonization of five Blessed on Sunday morning.

At the Cuatros Vientos Air Base in Madrid, the vigil with the *young people*, in the context of the prayer of the *Rosary* gave me an opportunity to propose once again in summary form the message of my Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* and of the Year of the Rosary which we

are celebrating. I invited the young people to be increasingly *men and women of strong interiority*, ceaselessly contemplating, together with Mary, Christ and his mysteries. Indeed, this is the most effective antidote to the *snares of consumerism* to which people today are exposed. It is urgently necessary to counter the suggestion of the *fleeting values* of the visible world, broadcast by a certain type of media, with the *lasting values* of the spirit, which can only be achieved by entering once again into one's own interiority through contemplation and prayer.

I was then delighted to note that the young are increasingly able to *play a lead role in the new evangelization* among their peers and are ready to devote their energies to the service of Christ and of his Kingdom. I entrust to the Virgin the youth of Madrid and of all Spain, who are the future and the hope of the Church and of society in that great nation.

3. The following day *the solemn Eucharistic celebration* took place in Plaza de Colón in the city centre. In the presence of the Royal Family, the Episcopate and the Authorities of the country, before a vast gathering that included representatives of all the ecclesiastical sectors, I had the joy of *canonizing five of Spain's children*: [Pedro Poveda Castroverde](#), priest and martyr; [José María Rubio y Peralta](#), priest; and the women religious, [Genoveva Torres Morales](#), [Angela de la Cruz](#) and [María Maravillas of Jesus](#).

These authentic *disciples of Christ and witnesses of his Resurrection* are an example for Christians throughout the world: finding in prayer the necessary strength, they were able to carry out the tasks that God entrusted to them in the contemplative life, in the pastoral ministry, in the field of education, in the apostolate of preaching retreats and in charity to the poor. May the believers and ecclesial communities of Spain be inspired by them in particular, so that this blessed land of God will continue, also in our time, to produce *abundant fruits of Gospel perfection*.

To this end, I urged the Christians of Spain to *remain faithful to the Gospel*, to defend and promote *the unity of the family*, and to preserve and renew continuously *the Catholic identity* that is the boast of the nation. It will be through the perennial values of its tradition that this noble country will be able to make its own effective contribution to building the new Europe.

4. This fifth [Apostolic Visit to Spain](#) has confirmed a deep conviction of mine: the old European nations have preserved their *Christian soul*, which is *part of the "genius" and history of their respective peoples*. Secularization is unfortunately threatening the fundamental values, but the Church intends to work constantly to keep this spiritual and cultural tradition alive.

Appealing to the *greatness of the Spanish soul* formed by solid human and Christian principles, I wanted to address to the young people especially Christ's words: *"You will be my witnesses"*. I repeat these words today, assuring the Church and the people of Spain, as well as all of you present here, of my prayers, reinforced by a special Apostolic Blessing.

To the English-speaking pilgrims present at this Audience, especially those from England, Scotland, Finland, the Russian Federation, India, Canada and the United States of America, I offer special greetings. Upon all of you I cordially invoke the grace and peace of the risen Saviour.

To young people, the sick and newly-weds

I now address the *young people*, the *sick* and the *newly-weds*. Tomorrow is the Feast of Our Lady of Pompei. I invite you, dear *young people*, to imitate Mary and always to trust in her motherly protection. May she help you to bring serenity wherever there is sorrow and loneliness. Dear *sick people*, I hope that you will live your condition with the help of the Blessed Virgin, confidently abandoning yourselves to the Lord's will. May Our Lady sustain you, dear *newly-weds*, so that your reciprocal fidelity may be a source of joy and peace.