



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO THE ROMAN PARISH OF ST. ANDREW THE APOSTLE

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Sunday, 4 March 2001

1. *"Jesus ... was led by the Spirit for forty days in the wilderness, tempted by the devil"* (Lk 4: 1-2). On this First Sunday of Lent, let us listen again to the account of Jesus' struggle against the devil at the beginning of his public life. After being acknowledged by the Father as his "beloved Son" during his Baptism in the river Jordan (cf. Lk 3: 22), now Jesus' *fidelity to God is put to the test*. However, unlike Adam and Eve in the earthly paradise (cf. Gn 3), and contrary to the people of Israel in the desert (cf. Ex 16-17; Dt 8), he resists the temptation and triumphs over the Evil One.

In this scene we glimpse the cosmic struggle of the forces of evil against the fulfilment of the saving plan which the Son of God came to proclaim and to initiate in his own person. For the era of the new creation begins with Christ; the new and perfect Covenant between God and all humanity is realized in him. This struggle against the Spirit of evil involves each of us, who are called to follow the divine Master's example.

2. *"When the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time"* (Lk 4: 13). The tempter's attack on Jesus, which began during his stay in the wilderness, will culminate in the days of his passion on Calvary, when the Crucified One will definitively triumph over evil and reconcile man with God. The Evangelist Luke closes today's account of the temptations with a *reference to Jerusalem*; unlike Matthew, he seems to want to emphasize from the outset that Christ's triumph on the Cross will take place in the Holy City, where the paschal mystery will be fulfilled.

In my Message for Lent this year, I wrote that Christ also extends to the men and women of today the *invitation to "go up to Jerusalem"*, that is, to follow him on the way of the Cross. Today we feel the powerful eloquence of his invitation, as we take our first steps of the Lenten season, an

acceptable time for conversion and for returning to full communion with God.

3. Dear brothers and sisters of *St Andrew the Apostle Parish!* I affectionately greet your entire community. I thank those who have welcomed me in the name of all at the beginning of the Eucharistic celebration. I greet the Cardinal Vicar, the Auxiliary Bishop of this sector, your dear parish priest, Fr Battista Previtali, and his co-workers from the Congregation of the Fathers of Christian Doctrine. I also extend my cordial greetings to the religious in the parish and to the faithful of the numerous and lively parish groups. Through those of you here, I would also like to extend my greeting to all who live in this neighbourhood.

This year your beautiful community of St Andrew the Apostle is celebrating *the 60th anniversary of its foundation*. Such a significant event will certainly be a fitting occasion to reflect on your past, to look clearly at the challenges and demands of the present time and courageously to develop plans for the future.

I joyfully join my voice to yours in thanking the Lord for the many signs of love he has granted this community from the beginning. Over the years your community has changed in part to acquire the form it has today, with the differences in the residents' way of life. The number of people from Eastern European countries and from the so-called "Third World" has increased.

4. This concrete situation in the parish requires you to keep on growing in communion with everyone. No one is a foreigner in the Church: thus it is important to create opportunities for dialogue and to encourage mutual understanding. It is particularly necessary that each person feel involved in pastoral care that is attentive to people's real needs.

May you thus *be a community which is open to everyone*, persevering in listening to God's word, in celebrating the sacraments of salvation and in sharing the many programmes of pastoral care and solidarity promoted by the Diocese and the Prefecture. I know you are continuing the task, begun during the City Mission, of bringing the Gospel to everyone, especially to young people and families. Lent is an acceptable time for the *rediscovery of Baptism and the missionary power that flows from it*. The over 100 secular missionaries of your community, who participated in the great City Mission in preparation for the Jubilee, can testify to this. Every Christian must feel involved in the vast work of evangelization. If you know how to be missionaries in your neighbourhood, the Lord will provide you with vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life. In particular, generous missionary vocations "*ad gentes*" will arise among you, as you desire.

5. I would now like to address families. Lent is an important season that invites us *to forgive and be reconciled*. It is a difficult task, which also concerns relationships *within the family*. It is up to you, dear families, to allow the Spirit to make you places of serenity and peace, of listening and dialogue, of sharing and respect for one another. In families faithful to the Gospel, young people can find the courage and confidence to look to the future with a sense of mature co-responsibility.

Dear young people, your future and that of the families you will start is in your hands: be well aware of this. The Church expects much from you, from your enthusiasm, from your ability to look ahead and from your longing to make radical decisions in life. I repeat Christ's words to you, contained in my Message for the forthcoming 16th World Youth Day: "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Lk 9: 23).

We must imitate Jesus who struggles against evil in the desert; we must even follow him to Jerusalem, to Calvary.

6. "*If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved*" (Rm 10: 9). Last Wednesday we began the Lenten journey, an ascetical journey which must lead us to a renewed encounter with Jesus, recognized as "Lord". It is he who saves us: professing the faith is therefore *believing in Christ* and entrusting ourselves to him without reserve. We will be saved (cf. Rom 10: 10), if we accept him and his words of eternal life.

May the Virgin Mary, faithful disciple of the Lord, help us to understand the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection (cf. *Opening Prayer*); may she help us to confess with our lips that Jesus is our Lord, and to believe in our hearts that he has conquered death, opening the gates of the kingdom to all humanity. Thus we will prepare ourselves, along with all believers, to taste the joy and splendour of Easter.