



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE ARCHBISHOP OF SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA
FOR THE OPENING OF THE HOLY DOOR
OF St JAMES CATHEDRAL**

*To the Most Reverend Julián Barrio Barrio
Archbishop of Santiago de Compostela*

1. In celebrating the rite of opening the Holy Door, which marks the beginning of the Holy Year of St James, I am spiritually united with the pastors and faithful of this Archdiocese of Santiago de Compostela with pilgrims from various regions of Galicia and with the whole Christian world which will come to the Porch of Glory in the hope of crossing the threshold of grace. In this way, they fulfil their longing for peace, for meeting the Lord and for strengthening their faith, after the example and through the intercession of the Apostle James, witness and martyr of the Gospel. The Jubilee that is now beginning, with the theme: "The Jubilee Year of Santiago de Compostela, Gateway to the Holy Year 2000", acquires a special significance from being celebrated near the end of the century and at the dawn of the third millennium, in which the Church and humanity await new challenges and new divine interventions in human affairs (cf. *Tertio millennio adveniente*, n. 17).

2. Down the centuries, the different routes of the "Road to Santiago" have been taken by pilgrims on their way to what was then called "finis terrae", to obtain the much desired "pardon" and, at the same time, to welcome again into their hearts the light of the Gospel handed down by the Apostles. Like Abraham, they left their homes in search of the land the Lord would show them (cf. Gn 12:1); they left the deceptive security of their own small world to put themselves in the hands of God's gift. At the end of their journey, they found the light of Christ, who is the true hope of humanity and the true homeland of every human being. Traveled in this spirit, the Road to Santiago can be a true process of conversion, a progressive taking off of the old man to put on the new, who is "created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph 4:24).

3. Recalling the indelible memories of my previous visits to Santiago, my thoughts turn at this time to the men and

women, young and old, who will set out for Compostela from Galicia and Spain, from Europe and from overseas. They will follow an age-old route, filled with magnificent works of art and culture on which so many generations have impressed the witness of their vigorous faith. They will meet others and have the opportunity to appreciate the varied customs and cultures in which the human person can express the best of himself, thereby opening himself to a more universal vision and a better understanding of various peoples. Acts of kindness and fraternal welcome will give special significance to Jesus' words: "you did it to me" (cf. *Mt 25:40*). Meditation and regular prayer will help the pilgrim enter into himself to find the deepest truth of his being, thus making an interior journey that prepares his heart to receive the Jubilee graces and to embrace the Saint, the traditional gesture that symbolizes joyful acceptance of faith in Christ, which the greatest of the Apostles preached tirelessly to the point of giving his life for it (*Acts 4:33; 12:1*).

4. This Holy Year offers the noble Spanish people, who put their profound Christian roots under the protection of the Apostle James, the particular Churches and in a special way the beloved Archdiocese of Compostela, an auspicious occasion to give renewed vigour to their commitment to Gospel values, while offering them persuasively to the new generation and instilling them in personal, family and social life.

This year will give direction to the various pastoral activities planned for the Jubilee, among which should be emphasized the European Youth Meeting and the National Eucharistic Congress. These events show the vitality of the faith and the evangelizing spirit typical of every community founded on the apostolic preaching. In this way, while the Jubilee of Compostela imparts the bread of "pardon" and grace, it is changed into a bright flame of Christian life and a reserve of energy for the new paths of evangelization (cf. *Address in Plaza del Obradoiro*, 19 August 1989, n. 2).

5. I pray to the Almighty for all who will come to Santiago in this year which the universal Church, in preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, has dedicated to God, our "heavenly Father". I ask him to make them aware of his immense love for each and every person, and to give them the necessary strength to return home to receive the fatherly embrace of welcome and forgiveness. This experience of God's ineffable mercy will also make them tireless witnesses, who know how to make God's goodness known and to reflect it in concrete acts of love and solidarity towards their brothers and sisters (cf. *Tertio millennio adveniente*, nn. 50-51).

I entrust the fruits of this Year of St James to Our Mother in heaven, who will accompany the pilgrims on the penitential journey and welcome them with a smile when they reach the Porch of Glory. With her help and through the powerful intercession of the Apostle James, may the beloved children of Galicia and Spain, as well as those from other places, make material and spiritual progress in a spirit of solidarity with the neediest and of peace with everyone.

With these wishes and as a sign of goodwill, I impart my Apostolic Blessing to them.

From the Vatican, 29 November 1998, the First Sunday of Advent.

IOANNES PAULUS PP. II

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