



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE
GATHERED AT CZĘSTOCHOWA (POLAND)
TO COMMEMORATE THE 10th ANNIVERSARY
OF THE 6th WORLD YOUTH DAY**

Dear Young Friends,

During these days I am going in spirit on pilgrimage with you to Czestochowa, to Jasna Góra. I kneel devoutly at the foot of the Black Madonna beside each one of you. I entrust each one of you to her motherly heart.

I do so just as I did 10 years ago when, during the unforgettable Sixth World Youth Day, Jasna Góra experienced a new siege. It was besieged by thousands of young people from all over the world - from the West and, for the first time, from the East. They came to confess unanimously from the depths of their hearts: *Maria, Regina Mundi! Maria, Mater Ecclesiae! Tibi adsumus!*

Mary, Queen of the World! Mary, Mother of the Church! We are close to you, we remember you, we are keeping watch with you! This threefold profession, which contains so to speak the mystery of Christianity and determines the whole reality of the life of faith, accompanied us in a special way during those days. Today we must return to it.

"I Am": this is God's name. Since the time of Abraham, God has not ceased to reveal this name, which is the foundation of the Old and New Covenants. This name does not only mean God's eternal existence, but also his presence, full of love - a presence with man, in the midst of his everyday events. "I am" was manifest once and for all in the Cross of Christ. "The divine "I AM" of the Covenant - of the Paschal Mystery - of the Eucharist". This is why, 10 years ago, the young people gathered at the foot of Jasna Góra, erected the cross in the midst of the assembly. They wanted to remember this "I Am", which contains in itself the "I am" of every human being. This is so because "the human person is created in the image and likeness of God, and can say to his Creator "I am'. This human "I am' includes the truth of being and conscience. "I am' before You, who "Are". Permit me to recall the words, which I addressed to the young people at that meeting

and which today seem even more timely: "The world around you, modern civilization, has influenced many to remove that divine "I Am' from man's consciousness. It tries to live as if God did not exist.

This is its plan. But if God does not exist, you, human person, can you really exist? You have come here, dear friends, to renew and confirm in its very depths your human identity: "I am', in front of the "I AM' of God. Look at the cross upon which the divine "I am' means "Love'. Look at the cross and do not forget! May the "I am near you' be the cornerstone of your whole life".

"I remember". "Man exists before God, he remains near God through the act of remembering. In this way he preserves the words of God and the great works of God, meditating on them in his heart like Mary of Nazareth". To be alive, this memory must continually return to the sources, to the words and events through which God revealed and brought about his plan of salvation. The truth about the love of God for man, written in the pages of the Bible, should not be forgotten! Young people knew this 10 years ago, and for this reason they have returned to Jasna Góra with the book of Sacred Scripture. Take up this sacred Book too, young people of the third millennium, never cease to be in close contact with the Gospel, with the word of the living God. Know Christ always better, in order to know yourselves better and to understand what your vocation and your dignity are.

"I keep watch". "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation" (*Mk 14,34*). How often Christ repeated this exhortation! I am watchful - "it means: I am obliged to be a person of conscience. I do not stifle this conscience and I do not distort it; I call good and evil by name, I do not confuse them; I have increased the good in me and tried to correct the bad, overcoming it in myself". I keep watch - this also means: I see the other person, make my eyes and my heart sensitive to his material and spiritual needs, and seek to know him with love.

When 10 years ago the young people from various countries, backgrounds and cultures meditated on what the word "watchful" meant to the believer, and sought a common model for reference, their insight rightly brought them towards the mother. "I keep watch" in fact expresses the mother's attitude.

"Her life and her vocation are expressed in being watchful. She keeps watch over men and women from the first moments of their existence". This is why, beside the Cross and the Bible, the young people set up another eloquent symbol: the icon of the Mother of God. They wanted the icon of Mary to represent, during World Youth Day, this special maternal watchfulness that accompanied the coming into the world of the Son of God and his agony on Golgotha, as well as the birth of the Church on the day of Pentecost. They wanted the image of the watchful Mother to be deeply engraved in their minds and hearts, and to form their lives. Today too, standing before the Icon of Jasna Góra, look at Mary's eyes, read in their depths the perfect purity of heart, a peace of conscience that is undisturbed, thanks to an ever faithful love. May this look remain in your souls.

May it always teach you what "I keep watch" means.

With the memory of the celebration of youth at Czestochowa, which we lived in joy and in deep prayer 10 years ago, I extend my cordial greetings to you - dear friends - and invite you to the future meetings of the great international community of Christ's young witnesses. I believe that these meetings will shape the personal life of each and every one of you, and will also help to ensure that the world of the new millennium is more human, serene and peaceful.

Once again I entrust you, your parents, your pastors and all Polish young people to the protection of Our Lady of Jasna Góra. I bless you with all my heart.

From Castel Gandolfo, 13 August 2001

JOHN PAUL II