



# The Holy See

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**MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER  
POPE JOHN PAUL II  
FOR THE VI WORLD YOUTH DAY**

***"You have received a spirit of sonship" (Rom 8:15).***

*Dear young people!*

1. The World Youth Days mark important stages in the life of the Church, as she seeks to intensify her commitment to evangelization in today's world, looking towards the year 2000. By proposing every year for your meditation *certain essential truths* of the Gospel teaching, these Days are intended to give nourishment for your faith and new energies for your apostolate.

As theme of the Sixth World Youth Day, I have chosen the words of St Paul: "*You have received a spirit of sonship*" (Rom 8:15). These words lead us into the deepest mystery of the Christian vocation: in the divine plan, we are indeed called to become *sons and daughters of God in Christ, through the Holy Spirit*.

How can we fail to be amazed at the heights to which we are called? The human being — a created and limited being, even a sinner — is destined to be a child of God! How can we fail to exclaim with St John: "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are!" (I Jn 3:1)? How can we remain indifferent to this challenge of God's paternal love, inviting us to so deep and intimate a communion?

As you celebrate the next World Day, let this holy amazement take possession of you, inspiring in each one of you an ever more filial attachment to God, our Father.

2. "*You have received a spirit of sonship...*" The Holy Spirit, the true agent of our divine sonship, has regenerated us to new life in the waters of Baptism. From that moment, he "bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom 8:16).

What does it mean, in the life of the Christian, to be a son or daughter of God: St Paul writes: "All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God "(Rom 8:14). To be sons and daughters of God means, therefore, to receive the Holy Spirit, to let ourselves be guided by him, to be, open to his action in our personal history and in the history of the world.

To all of you young people, on the occasion of this World Youth Day, I say: *Receive the Holy Spirit and be strong in faith!* "God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and selfcontrol" (2 Tim 1:7).

"*You have received a spirit of sonship...*" The children of God, that is the men and women re-born in Baptism and strengthened in Confirmation, are among the first to build a new civilization, *the civilization of truth and love*: they are the light of the world and the salt of the earth (cf. Mt 5:13-16).

I am thinking of the profound changes taking place in the world. For many peoples the doors are opening the hope of a life more worthy of them and more human. In this connection, I recall the truly prophetic words of the Second Vatican Council: "The Spirit of God, who with marvellous providence directs the course of history and renews the face of the earth, is present in this evolution" (*Gaudium et spes*, 26).

Yes, *the Spirit of the sons and daughters of God is the driving force in the history of peoples*. In every age, the Spirit raises up new men and women who live in holiness, in truth and in justice. On the threshold of the year 2000, the world that is anxiously seeking ways of living together in greater solidarity urgently needs to count on persons who, with the help of the Holy Spirit, are capable of living as true children of God.

3. "The proof that you are sons is that God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts: the Spirit that cries, 'Abba, Father', and it is this that makes you a son; you are not a slave any more; and if God has made you son, then He has made you heir" (Gal 4:6-7). St Paul speaks to us of the *heritage of the sons and daughters of God*. What is meant is a gift of eternal life, but at the same time, a task to be carried out already today, a design for life that is fascinating, especially for you young people, who, in your inmost hearts have a yearning for high ideals.

*Holiness is the essential heritage of the children of God*. Christ says: "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48). This means doing the will of the Father in every circumstance of life. It is the high road that Jesus has pointed out to us: "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Mt 7:21).

I repeat again today what I said at Santiago de Compostela: "*Young people, do not be afraid to be holy!*" Fly high, be among those whose goals are worthy of sons and daughters of God. Glorify God in your lives!

4. *The heritage of the sons and daughters of God* includes *brotherly love*, after the example of Jesus, first-born among many brothers and sisters (cf. Rom 8:29): "Love one another, as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12). If we call upon God as "Father", we cannot fail to recognize in our neighbour — whoever this may be — a brother or sister who has a right to our love. This is the great commitment for the children of God: working to build a society in which all peoples will give fraternally together.

Is not this what the world most needs today? Within nations we can feel the strength of longing for unity that will break down every barrier of indifference and hate. It is especially for you, young people, to take on the great task of *building a society where there will be more justice and solidarity*.

5. Another prerogative of the children of God is freedom; this also is part of their *heritage*. We touch here on a subject to which you young people are particularly sensitive, because what is at issue is an immense gift that the Creator has placed in our hands. But a gift that must be used rightly. How many *false forms of freedom* there are, leading to slavery!

In the Encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* I wrote on this subject: "Jesus Christ meets the men and women of every age, including our own, with the same words: 'You will know the truth and the truth will make you free' (Jn 8:32). These words contain both a fundamental requirement and a warning: the requirement of an honest relationship to truth as a condition for authentic freedom, and the warning to avoid every kind of illusory freedom, every superficial unilateral freedom, every freedom that fails to enter into the whole truth about the human being and the world. Today also, even after two thousand years, we see Christ as the one who brings men and women freedom based on truth..." (n. 12).

"*When Christ freed us he meant us to remain free*" (Gal 5:1). Liberation by Christ is liberation from sin, the root of all human slaveries. St Paul says: "You who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness" (Rom 6:17). Freedom, therefore, is a gift and, at the same time, an essential duty for every Christian: "You did not receive the spirit of slavery..." (Rom 8:15), the Apostle reminds us.

*Exterior freedom*, guaranteed by just civil laws, is important and necessary. We rightly rejoice that today, in an ever increasing number of countries, the fundamental rights of the human person are respected, even if, not infrequently, there has been a high price to pay in sacrifice and bloodshed. But, however precious, exterior freedom alone is not enough. It must be rooted always in the interior freedom that belongs to the children of God, who live according to the Spirit (cf. Gal 5:16) and are guided by an upright moral conscience, capable of choosing what is truly good. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor 3:17). This, dear young people, is the only path to take if humankind is to become mature and worthy of its name.

See, then, how great and challenging is *the heritage of the sons and daughters of God*, to which you are called. Receive it with gratitude and responsibility. Do not waste it! Have the courage, every day, to live by it consistently and to announce it to others. In this way, the world will become, more and more, *the great family of the sons and daughters of God*.

6. At the heart of the World Youth Day 1991 there will be another *world youth rally*.

This time, to conclude the customary meetings and celebrations in the dioceses, we will meet to pray together at the Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa, in Poland, my home country. Many of you, remembering the experience of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela (1989), will flock joyfully to this rendezvous on the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 14 and 15 August 1991. In our hearts and in our prayers, we will bring with us the youth of the whole world.

Set out therefore, already now, on your way to the dwelling of the Mother of Christ and our Mother, meditating, under her loving gaze, on the theme of the Sixth World Day: "*You have received a spirit of sonship...*".

Where better than at the feet of God's Mother can we learn what it means to be sons and daughters of God? Mary is the best teacher. The role entrusted to her was fundamental for the history of salvation: "When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Gal 4:4-5).

Where better than in her maternal heart can we guard the heritage of the sons and daughters of God Promised by the Father? We bear this gift in vessels of clay. For each one of us, our pilgrimage will be, therefore, a great act of entrustment to Mary. We will be going to a Shrine which, for the Polish people, has a very special significance as a place of evangelization and conversion; a Shrine to which thousands of pilgrims make their way from all parts of the country and of the world.

For more than 600 years, in the Monastery of Jasna Góra at Czestochowa, Mary has been venerated in the miraculous icon of the Black Madonna. There, at the most difficult moments of its history, the Polish people has found, in the Mother's house, the strength of faith and hope, its own dignity and the heritage of the children of God.

For the young people of East and West, of North and South, for all, the pilgrimage to Czestochowa will be a witness of faith to the whole world. It will be a pilgrimage of freedom across the frontiers of States which, more and more, are opening to Christ, Redeemer of humanity.

7. My intention with this Message is to inaugurate the journey of spiritual preparation both for the Sixth World Youth Day and for the pilgrimage to Czestochowa. These reflections are meant to

serve as initial steps on this journey, which is above all one of faith, of conversion and of a return to the essentials of our life.

For you, young people of the countries of Eastern Europe, I have a word of special encouragement. Do not miss this appointment. Already now, it can be seen as a memorable encounter between the youth of the Churches of East and West. Your presence at Czestochowa will be an immensely meaningful witness to faith.

And you, dear young people of my beloved Poland, you are called this time to give hospitality to your friends from all parts of the world. For you and for the Church of Poland this encounter, in which I too will take part, will be an extraordinary spiritual gift at this moment of your history, so full of hope for the future.

Kneeling in spirit before the image of the Black Madonna of Czestochowa I entrust to her loving protection the whole event of the Sixth World Youth Day.

For you, dear young people, my warm paternal Blessing.

*From the Vatican, 15 August 1990, Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.*