



## The Holy See

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### **ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II**

### **TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF "COMMUNION AND LIBERATION"<sup>31 March 1979</sup>**

*Dear Young People,*

I bid you welcome. This spontaneous and joyful enthusiasm with which you welcomed my arrival in this hall, is a testimony of sincere affection and is also a very clear expression of the deep faith you have in the ecclesial ministry, entrusted to me by Christ.

Your presence today is a great joy for me. And I cannot say that we are meeting for the first time; I do not know how many times we have met already. I remember all those meetings in Poland. And I must say that those meetings have yielded their fruit, because on entering today I did not know who was in this Hall. Are they Italian or Polish young people? I asked myself.

So many meetings! I remember well those at Kroscienko, and then once also at Krakow.

But it is now necessary to speak of your pilgrimage. I have always thought that I was quite a faithful pilgrim, faithful to Czestochowa and to Jasna Gora, but I have met also here persons who have made the pilgrimage from Warsaw to Czestochowa twice, on foot. Whereas I have made it only once and not from Warsaw, but, from Krakow, which is a shorter distance. So you have been pilgrims in Poland so many times. You come to Kroscienko, you come nearly everywhere during summer when those so-called oases, those assemblies, spiritual exercises of young Poles are held. You like to come and spend those days with them. And then you come to take part in that pilgrimage from Warsaw to Czestochowa, which is, if I am not mistaken, a distance of two hundred and fifty kilometers, and the way is not so easy.

Last year the number of Italian participants was the highest and I think that the majority of those pilgrims consisted of young people belonging to your Movement.

Once I remember, perhaps it is a good thing that I should remember—I am not reading—but it will be the last memory for the moment, I remember on one occasion at Krakow, after that Warsaw-

Czestochowa pilgrimage, there came a group, an Italian group, to my chapel at Krakow in the Archbishop's house, and they sang in Polish. I was not able to distinguish: are they those of Communion and Liberation or are they those of our Movement for the living Church? And so we are not meeting for the first time.

I tell you that this meeting today is for me above all a very great joy, and I hope that there will always be such a joy, a similar joy.

I wish to express to you the comfort and satisfaction that this meeting with you gives me. I have already had occasion repeatedly to bear witness to the confidence I have in the young—everywhere: in Poland, in Mexico, in Italy; the confidence I have in their generous enthusiasm for every noble and great cause, in their prompt and disinterested readiness for sacrifice for the ideals in which they believe.

I express this confidence once again to you this morning, to you who believe in Christ, in whom is placed the real hope of the world, for he is "the true light that enlightens every man" (Jn 1:9). You have set out to bring to every environment, in which Providence has placed you to live, to serve and to love, the renewing message of faith, because you are convinced that it is possible to find in the Gospel the satisfying answer to all the questions that beset man. Your proposal has met with support, though amid conflicts and opposition, and I know that you have also suffered.

Then, amid conflicts and opposition, you have seen converging upon you and taking their place at your side other young people, for whom your example has opened up new horizons of dedication, self-fulfilment and joy.

So you have been able to ascertain personally how much our world needs Christ. It is important that you should continue to proclaim his word of salvation with humble courage. Only from this, in fact, can the true liberation of man come. St John wrote incisively: "The Word gave power to become children of God" (Jn 1:12). In Christ, that is, is placed the source of the strength which transforms man inwardly, the principle of that new life which does not fade and does not pass, but lasts for eternal life (cf. Jn 4:14).

Only the meeting with him, therefore, can satisfy that restlessness in which, as I noted in my recent Encyclical, there "beats and pulsates what is most deeply human—the search for truth, the insatiable need for the good, hunger for freedom, nostalgia for the beautiful, and the voice of conscience" (*Redemptor Hominis*, 18). It is logical, therefore, that "seeking to see man as it were with the eyes of Christ himself, the Church becomes more and more aware that she is the guardian of a great treasure, which she may not waste but must continually increase" (cf. *ibid.*).

Every Christian is called to participate in this awareness, and in the commitment deriving from it. So you too, young people, beloved young people, have shown, in the very name chosen to

describe your movement "Communion and Liberation" (I must say that I like this name very much, I like it for many reasons: for a theological reason and for, I would say, an ecclesiological reason. This name is so closely linked with the ecclesiology of Vatican II. Then I like it because of the perspective it opens to us: the personal, interior perspective and the social perspective: Communion and Liberation. For its topicality, this is the task of the Church today: a task which is expressed precisely in the name "Communion and Liberation"). With this name, therefore, you have shown that you are well aware of the deepest expectations of modern man. The liberation to which the world aspires—you have reasoned—is Christ; Christ lives in the Church; man's true liberation takes place, therefore, in experience of ecclesial communion; to build up this communion is, therefore, the essential contribution that Christians can make to the liberation of all.

It is a profoundly true intuition: I cannot but urge you to draw from it consistently all its logical consequences. The Church is essentially a mystery of communion: I would say that it is a call to communion, to life in communion. In vertical communion, let us say, and in horizontal communion; in communion with God himself, with Christ and in communion with others. It is communion that explains a full relationship between one person and another. The Church is essentially a mystery of communion: intimate communion, always renewed with the very source of life which is the Most Holy Trinity. It is communion of life, of love, of imitation, of following Christ, the Redeemer of man, who integrates us closely with God. Hence springs the active authentic communion of love among us, by virtue of our ontological assimilation to him.

A call to communion. Live with generous impulse the demands that spring from this reality. Try, therefore, to create unity in thoughts, in sentiments, in initiatives around your parish priests and with them around the bishop, who is the "visible principle and foundation of unity in the particular Church" (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 23). By means of communion with your bishop, you can reach the certainty of being in communion with the Pope, with the whole Church; of being in communion with the Pope who loves you, who has confidence in you and who expects a great deal from your action in the service of the Church and of so many brothers whom Christ has not yet reached with the light of his message.

Among the criteria of authenticity that my great predecessor Paul VI set on ecclesial movements in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, there is one that deserves to be meditated upon attentively: the "communautés de base", small communities, Paul VI said, will be "a place of evangelization" and "a hope for the Church" if they "remain firmly attached to the local Church in which they are inserted, and to the universal Church, thus avoiding the very real danger of becoming isolated within themselves, then of believing themselves to be the only authentic Church of Christ, and hence of condemning the other ecclesial communities" (58).

These are words dictated by a wide pastoral experience, and you are able to appreciate all their wisdom. Accustom yourselves to compare with them your every concrete initiative. On this constant effort of verification there depends the apostolic efficacy of your activity, which will then

be the authentic expression of the Church's saving mission in the world.

I said that this name, Communion and Liberation, opens up to us an interior and at the same time a social perspective. Interior, because it makes us live in communion with others, with those nearest; it makes us seek this communion in our personal path, in our friendship, in our love, in our marriage, in our family. Then in the various environments: it is very important to maintain that level of communion in intrahuman, interpersonal relations; that level of communion in relations among men, among persons. It makes it possible for us to create a real liberation, because man is liberated in communion with others, not in isolation; not individually, but with others, through others, for others. This is the full meaning of the communion from which liberation springs.

Liberation, as I said also in a Wednesday address in this Hall, liberation has various meanings. A great deal depends on the social and cultural environment: liberation means different things. It is one thing in Latin America, another thing in Italy, another thing in Europe and yet another thing in Western Europe or in Eastern Europe, another thing in African countries, etc. It is necessary to seek that incarnation of liberation which is the right one in the particular context in which we live. But liberation is always obtained in communion and by means of communion.

Beloved young people, concluding this meeting and these words—I know that they have not touched on all the possible subjects; they have touched, I would say, only on the most essential points: the meaning of your name. But we hope there will be other opportunities to go on and study the subject more deeply; it is not possible to say everything on one occasion; it is better that listeners should remain with their appetite still not quite satisfied—well, concluding this meeting, I wish to leave you one instruction: with the Church go confidently towards man. In the Encyclical I indicated precisely in man the main way along which the Church must walk, "because man—every man without any exception whatever—has been redeemed by Christ, and because with man—with each man without any exception whatever—Christ is in a way united, even when man is unaware of it" (*Redemptor Hominis*, 14). Let your Christian witness be nourished by this certainty and draw from it a new impulse and a new freshness every day.

Let us now have a little interval, to impart the Blessing. I am sure that there is nothing else to be said, just to accept this Blessing and to let it be heard in our hearts. But before the Blessing I want also to address your Spiritual Father. And then I want to address your President too, who spoke to me at the beginning, who introduced me and who offered me also that Brazilian picture. I am grateful for your gift. I am grateful to the artist, the painter; I am very grateful to the painter who made it. And now we can pray, and give the Blessing.

Afterwards some ideas and some words will come to us . . . (prayer follows)

And now some words that came to us during the prayer.

First: I want to thank you for the fact that you introduced me into the Pontificate: you came on the first day, also bearing an inscription in Polish. But I thought at once: they are not Poles who are carrying it, because—I shall explain to you why not—because there was a mistake, an error of spelling. That is the first thing that came to us during the player.

Second: well, things being as they are, we must now sing *Otejes gen*. We must sing together, because what that song expresses is true.

...(there follows the song).

There is another idea, a word. Why am I leaving you in this way with your appetite not quite satisfied, not touching on all the subjects? Because I have arranged to meet the students of Rome on Thursday, next week, for a Eucharistic Celebration in St Peter's Basilica, an Easter Celebration. The Cardinal Vicar said: Easter with the students. So I must not say too much today, in order to leave something to say next week. That is enough.

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