



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC VISIT TO CANADA

**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF NEWFOUNDLAND**

*Memorial University
Wednesday, 12 September 1984*

Dear Young People, Brothers and Sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ,

1. I thank you for your warm welcome here today in Newfoundland. It is a great joy for me to join you as you celebrate your faith in Jesus Christ at this festival of youth. I thank God for you and for young people everywhere, for the special gifts of your youth, and for the part you play among us in building a more just, peaceful and loving world. In the words of Saint Paul: "I thank my God whenever I think of you, and every time I pray for all of you, I pray with joy" (*Phil.* 1, 3).

2. To live in this immense country which has been blessed with peace and freedom is cause for thanksgiving. You have freedom of speech, of worship and movement - and you have political options. And yet you are not without your problems. I know that many of you young people have no jobs and look to the future with deep anxiety. You are challenged by chronic and painful unemployment to keep alive a spirit of hope, to try to use creatively the enforced leisure which joblessness creates. Others among you are in school, where there is also uncertainty. You are sometimes tempted to give up and to ask: What is the use of all this effort? What is the meaning of human life? Where is it all leading?

These are questions that are being asked by young people all over the world. They are being asked by young men and women who, in many countries, do not have enough to eat and have no chance for a formal education. They are being asked by young people who live in the midst of injustice, violence and persecution. They are being asked by young people who are searching for peace, craving for justice and longing for God. They were asked this year by the young people

who came to Rome to celebrate with me the Holy Year of the Redemption.

3. As a pastor and as a brother, I wish to offer you today a powerful reason to hope and to see life as a great and precious gift of God. And this reason is Jesus Christ, the Son of God who came into the world to teach us the full meaning of human life. Through the power of his Spirit, the same Jesus who died on the Cross and rose from the dead is alive in his Church; he is alive in you who bear his name as Christians and who strive to listen to his words of life.

I am here to proclaim this presence of Jesus in your lives and the power of his love working in your hearts. Because of this presence and this power you can do great things. This is your life's call, a call of God to serve your community and your Church. Perhaps you will be called to serve as a husband or wife, a parent, a single person, a religious or a priest. But in every case it is a call to a personal conversion, a call to open your hearts to the message of Christ and to his power in your lives. Every economic, social or political structure in the world that needs reform can be adequately changed only when our hearts are purified, because the source of all injustice is the human heart.

Young people of Newfoundland and of all Canada, you are invited by Christ to a conversion of heart, to a life lived in union with him. For this reason you must not let yourselves be overwhelmed by anxiety, by the painful sense of helplessness, or by the temptation to revolt or drop out. No one can deny that much of the world is in frightening disorder: the inhumanity of many persons and the injustice of certain systems cause unspeakable human misery; the possibility of nuclear confrontation creates anxiety and fear. But you are in a position to face all problems with a new attitude, a new heart, a new power: your faith in Jesus Christ who is alive in you. In the words of Saint John: "This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith" (1 Jo. 5, 4).

4. In God's plan you were not meant to inherit a broken world. It is the responsibility of all of us to change the dangerous course of events on which human beings have embarked. You, the youth of this country, are called to play a special part in shaping and building a better world. Your efforts can succeed, but you must make them in union with the Christ who is powerful within you and who speaks to your hearts.

In union with the Lord begin your task by looking critically at yourselves and then at the society in which you live. To do this you have to know how to judge and with what set of rules. You need the right scale of values, a clear vision of the world, of human work, of human life, of love. How, you may ask, do you acquire all this?

Every day the media and the example of people around you present certain models of life. Very often these show selfishness winning over generosity. Today I invite you to look at another model of humanity - one which can fully satisfy your thirst for meaning. The person that I present over and over again to the youth of the world is the Jesus about whom we are speaking. Although he is

Son of God, he is also Mary's Son and he shares completely in our human nature. He experienced joy and suffering, hunger and pain; he knew the beauty of nature and the love of friendship. Forever he remains the true image of what it is to be human. He is Jesus of Nazareth and we get to know him in the pages of the Gospels. He was put to death for having cast his lot with the poor and exploited, for having come to serve and not to be served. But God his Father raised him from the dead. Through his Holy Spirit he remains in our midst and within us: he is the source of strength in the daily struggle to uplift our world. This is our Christian faith: with his help, we can carry out the program he left us, so simple and yet so all-embracing: "Love one another as I have loved you" (*Jo.* 15, 12).

5. On every page of the Gospel, Jesus keeps telling us that we must never despair, that love triumphs over every obstacle, over every failure, over suffering and hatred, even over death itself. This love, dear young people, and the peace that it brings, will anchor you firmly amid the chaos of the world; it will also lead you into deeper involvement with that world. Jesus invites you to love and to serve.

Begin by doing something concrete in your own situation. Do not look too far afield. Begin now where you work or study, in your youth groups, in your family circle, in your parish. Never allow anyone among your acquaintances to be deprived of his or her rights, or put down by others because he or she is not of your social milieu, or your colour, or does not speak your language or share your faith. Refuse to build barriers between yourselves and older people. Be present also in their situations, because there your voice is needed and you will contribute and learn. Give your enthusiastic support to those local groups which are seeking to build a more human world, and then broaden your horizons and work with the joyful energy of youth for the cause of justice everywhere. Learn to deprive yourselves, in order to share with the hungry and with young people who have received less than you. In solidarity with your brothers and sisters of different nations and races and cultures, it is possible for you to change the world and to shape a better future for all - a future in which persons are more important than profits; in which the world's resources are justly shared, and in which peaceful negotiations replace threats of war.

6. But in order to do this you need God's help. And God's help comes to you through prayer. Your union with Christ will be the secret of your effectiveness, and it is strengthened by your prayer, your conversation with God, the lifting up of your heart to him. But Jesus has also provided for your needs through the Sacraments of the Church, particularly the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Penance. The conversion of your hearts is brought about by Christ's action and Christ reaches out to you in his Sacraments, which will always be for you an expression and celebration of your faith and your life in Christ. Sin is a human reality and we all need to experience forgiveness, reconciliation and peace in a personal encounter with Christ. God's providence supplies this opportunity for us in Confession, and makes available in the Eucharist an access to his love that responds to our deepest yearning for an interpersonal relationship.

Yes, to build a civilization based on love and truth and justice is surely a gigantic task. But you are equal to it! Why? Because of Christ, living in you, because of his Sacraments, because of your union with him through prayer. Take courage then, dear young people, for we are celebrating together our faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of the world. As we approach the end of this millennium, remember that Christ needs you, the youth of Newfoundland, of Canada and the world. He needs you with pure hearts and generous love to help him in his mission of uplifting humanity and bringing his salvation to the world. This is Christ's mission and he shares it with you!

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