



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY

TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND CANADA MEETING WITH THE FAITHFUL GATHERED

IN THE CATHEDRAL OF SAINT LOUIS ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II *New Orleans*

Saturday, 12 September 1987

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all!" (2 Cor. 13, 14).

Dear Archbishop Hannan,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. From this Cathedral of Saint Louis am happy to greet, in the name of the Most Holy Trinity, the whole Church in New Orleans – all those who make up her membership, all those who work together to fulfill her mission. In particular today I greet all of you, dear priests and religious of Louisiana. Here in this mother Church of the archdiocese, *I give thanks and praise to the living God* for your lives of dedicated service to Christ and his Church.

This temple of God, this house of prayer and gate of heaven stands as the *central point of the City of New Orleans*, and from this place all distances are measured. Here Christ dwells in your midst, present in word and Sacrament, making this a place of grace and blessing for all the People of God. Here God the Father is adored in spirit and truth, (Cfr. *Io.* 4, 23), and here the Holy Spirit is always at work in the hearts of the faithful, preparing them for the glory of the heavenly Jerusalem. And just as this Cathedral of Saint Louis is the focal point of the City of New Orleans, so too *Christ is the very center of your lives*. Christ is for you "the beginning and the end" (*Apoc.* 21, 6); he is for you "the way, and the truth, and the life" (*Gal.* 2, 20). So closely are you identified with Christ that each of you can say, as did Saint Paul: "The life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me. I still live my human life, but it is a life of faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me". And together with Saint Paul you must proclaim: "Nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (*Rom.* 8, 39). The Church in Louisiana owes a great debt of gratitude to the many priests and religious who have laboured here from the beginning. That tradition of heroic dedication in proclaiming the Gospel of Christ by word and deed

continues today in the service that you render to the People of God. Always remember that the supernatural effectiveness of your service within the Church is linked to *the witness of your life lived in union with Christ*. You are therefore called to conform your lives more and more to the person and message of Jesus Christ. And never forget that the precise goal of all apostolic service is to lead all people to communion with the Most Holy Trinity. 2. Our lives as Christians find their origin and destiny in *the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity*, the fundamental mystery of our Christian faith. The one God whom we worship is a unity of Three Divine Persons, "equal in majesty, undivided in splendor, yet one Lord, one God, ever to be adored" (*Praefatio de SS.ma Trinitate*). The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit exist in an eternal communion of life and love with one another. In the Church we are privileged *to participate now and forever in the communion of life and love*, which is the mystery of God, One in Three.

The Second Vatican Council teaches that "it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that the Church takes her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father". Thus as members of the Church we benefit from *the mission of the Son* and *the mission of the Holy Spirit* which flow from "that fountain of love' or charity within God the Father" (*Ad Gentes*, 2). It is from the Father," who is 'origin without origin', that the Son is begotten and the Holy Spirit proceeds through the Son" (*Ibid*).

In revealing to us the mystery of the Father *the Son carries out* the Father's will and brings about our salvation. And in describing the mission of the Holy Spirit, the Council says: "When the work which the Father had given the Son to do on earth was accomplished, the Holy Spirit was sent on the day of Pentecost in order that he might forever sanctify the Church, and thus all believers would have access to the Father through Christ in the one Spirit (Cfr. *Eph. 2, 18*)" (*Lumen Gentium*, 4).

3. In Saint John's Gospel we read: "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, ever at the Father's side who revealed him" (*Jo. 1, 18*). Although the Old Testament contained elements that prepared us for the revelation of Jesus, it did not unveil this profound mystery of God: the mystery of the Father, the intimate life of God, the communion of the Three Divine Persons. *Only the Son of God made man bears witness to the truth about the Trinity; only he reveals it*.

The truth about the divine Sonship of Jesus and the Trinitarian mystery of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are alluded to at the time of the Annunciation, as well as during the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan. Moreover, during his public ministry Jesus speaks about his Father and the Holy Spirit. In the Gospel of John we find many affirmations by Jesus about the intimate union that he shares with the Father. But is during his discourse at *the Last Supper* that *Jesus discloses in a definitive way the truth about the Holy Spirit* and the relationship which the Spirit has with the Father and the Son. We can say that throughout his teaching Jesus "has opened up vistas closed to human reason" concerning the life of the One God in the Trinity of divine Persons. When he had completed his Messianic mission and was taking leave of his Apostles on the day of his Ascension, Jesus announced to them: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations. Baptize

them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (*Matth.* 28, 19). Thus with these last words *Jesus solemnly entrusts to them the supreme truth of the undivided Unity of the Most Holy Trinity*. 4. Dear brothers and sisters: your life of service dedicated to Christ and his Church bears witness to *the reality of God's love for his people*. You joyfully proclaim the Good News of faith, that "*God is love*" (*Jo.* 4, 8). In Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus we hear those words: "Yes, God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him may not die but may have eternal life" (*Jo.* 3, 16). The Father so loved the world that he sent us his only Son, and through his Son he sent the Holy Spirit. Today and each day of our lives we celebrate the love of God the Father for each of us—the love revealed in the Word made flesh and in the gift of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, we proclaim that God sent his only Son into the world *not to condemn the world*, but that the world might be saved through him. Yes, we proclaim to the world *God's everlasting love*. May the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Prompt Succour and Mother of Divine Love, help you and the whole Church in New Orleans and throughout Louisiana to bear witness to the merciful love of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

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