



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND CANADA

VISIT TO THE CATHEDRAL OF SAINT VIBIANA

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Los Angeles
Tuesday, 15 September 1987

Dear Archbishop Mahony, dear Cardinal Manning,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. I greet you today *in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Through his love and mercy we are gathered together in the Church to offer praise and thanksgiving to our heavenly Father. Grace and peace be to all of you - the clergy, religious and laity of this city named in honour of Our Lady of the Angels. May she continue to assist you in praising God both now and forever with the angels, the patroness of this cathedral - Saint Vibiana - and all the saints.

I wish to join my voice to the chorus of praise offered to God in the name of Jesus in so many languages and by people of different races and ethnic origins in this great metropolis. It is his name above all that *unites us in one household* of faith, hope and love. It is the name of Jesus that transcends every division and heals every antagonism within the human family.

As the Successor of Peter, I come to you today in the name of Jesus. It cannot be otherwise, since every true minister of the Gospel preaches not himself nor any message of human origin, but he *preaches Jesus Christ* as Lord (Cfr. *2Cor.* 4-5). To the fears, doubts and struggles of individuals and nations, the Church seeks to apply the healing power of that name which belongs to him who alone is the Word of God (Cfr. *Apoc.* 19, 13).

2. In a world filled with competing ideologies and so many false and empty promises, the name of Jesus Christ brings salvation and life. The Hebrew word "*Jesus*" means "*Saviour*", as the angel said to Joseph in his dream: "You are to name him Jesus because he will save his people from their sins" (*Matth.* 1, 21). At the very beginning of the Church's mission, Saint Peter proclaims that "there is no salvation in anyone else, for there is no other name in the whole world given to men by which they are to be saved" (*Act.* 4, 12). This name is a source of life for those who believe (Cfr. *Io.* 20, 31); it delivers us from evil and leads us to the truth that alone can set us free (Cfr. *ibid.* 8, 32).

The name of Jesus is therefore *a cry of deliverance* for all humanity. It has the power to comfort and heal the sick (Cfr. *Act.* 3, 6; *Iac.* 5, 14-15), to cast out demons (Cfr. *Marc.* 16, 17; *Luc.* 10, 17; *Act.* 16, 18), and to work every kind of miracle (Cfr. *Matth.* 7, 22; *Act.* 4, 30). Most importantly it is in the name of Jesus and through his power that our sins are forgiven (Cfr. *1Io.* 2, 12).

The *name of Jesus* is at the heart of Christian worship in this cathedral and in every church throughout the world: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst" (*Matth.* 18, 20). The name of Jesus is at the heart of all Christian prayer: "All you ask the Father in my name he will give you" (*Io.* 15, 16). It is a motivation for charity because as Jesus himself explained, "whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ, will by no means lose his reward" (*Marc.* 9, 41). It calls forth the gift of the Holy Spirit, "the Paraclete, whom the Father will send in my name" (*Io.* 14, 26).

3. My dear brothers and sisters: we are called Christians, and therefore the name of Jesus Christ is also our name. At the baptismal font we received a "Christian name" which symbolizes our communion with Christ and his saints. Our identification with him is reflected in the rule of life which Saint Paul proposes in the Letter to the Colossians: "Whatever you do whether in speech or in action, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus. Give thanks to God the Father through him" (*Col.* 3, 17). We are obliged not only to give thanks, but also *to speak and act* in the name of Jesus, even at the risk of being ill-treated, persecuted and hated "for the sake of the Name" as Jesus foretold (*Act.* 5, 41; cfr. etiam *Marc.* 13, 13; *Luc.* 21, 12).

As citizens of the United States, you must give thanks to God for the religious liberty which you enjoy under your Constitution, now in its two hundredth year. However, freedom to follow your Catholic faith does not automatically mean that it will be easy to "speak and act" in the name of the Lord Jesus with a conscience formed by the word of God authentically interpreted by the Church's teaching (Cfr. *Dei Verbum*, 9s.). In a secularized world, to speak and act in the name of Jesus can bring *opposition and even ridicule*. It often means being out of step with majority opinion. Yet if we look at the New Testament, we find encouragement everywhere for perseverance in this testing of our faith. As the First Letter of Saint Peter tells us: "If anyone suffers for being a Christian... he ought not to be ashamed. He should rather glorify God in virtue of that name" (*1Petr.* 4, 6). And Jesus himself says, "In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the

world" (Io. 16, 33).

Is not this message extremely important for young people who are trying *to live a responsible moral life* in the face of a tide of popular culture and peer pressure that is indifferent, if not hostile, to Christian morality. And for their parents, who face daily pressures in the conduct of both their private and public life? And for the clergy and religious who may sometimes find it difficult to speak the full truth of the Church's teaching because it is a "hard saying" that many will not readily accept?

Dear brothers and sisters: the name of Jesus, like the Word of God that he is, is a two-edged sword (Cfr. *Hebr. 4- 12*). *It is a name that means salvation and life*; it is a name that means a struggle and a cross, just as it did for him. But it is also the name in which we find *strength to proclaim and live the truth* of the Gospel: not with arrogance, but with confident joy; not with self-righteousness, but with humble repentance before God; never with enmity, and always with charity.

Dear people of this great Archdiocese of Los Angeles, with its many problems, its enormous challenges, and its immense possibilities for good: *the name of Jesus is your life and your salvation*. It is your pride and joy, and the pride and joy of your families and your parishes. In this name you find strength for your weaknesses and energy for daily Christian living. In your struggle against evil and the Evil One, and in your striving for holiness, the name of Jesus is the source of your hope, because in the name of Jesus you are invincible!

Continue, then, dear Catholic people of Los Angeles, to invoke this holy name of Jesus in your joys and your sorrows; continue to teach this name to your children, so that they in turn can teach it to their children, until the Lord Jesus himself comes in glory to judge the living and the dead!

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