



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO JAMAICA, MEXICO AND DENVER (COLORADO)
(AUGUST 8-16, 1993)

MEETING WITH THE LAY REPRESENTATIVES OF JAMAICA

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

*Auditorium of Saint George's College, Kingston
Tuesday, 10 August 1993*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

1. It gives me great joy to be among you at last, on this beautiful Island so rightly described by Columbus as "Santa Gloria". With heartfelt affection I greet you, *catechists, teachers, members of parish organizations and other lay representatives, as well as the young people present* – all faithful sons and daughters of the Church in the Archdiocese of Kingston, the Diocese of Montego Bay and the Apostolic Vicariate of Mandeville. "My love is with you in Christ Jesus" (1Cor. 16: 24).

It is precisely to speak about Christ and his love that the Bishop of Rome has come to Jamaica, to the auditorium of Saint George's College. Indeed, this is an appropriate place in which to consider the nature of Christian love and the deeds in which it necessarily finds expression. Just a few weeks after that September day in 1850 when this College first opened its doors, members of its Jesuit community, with that bravery which is born of true charity, set about caring for the victims of a terrible cholera epidemic. Yes, this is the love I mean, the unsparing gift of self, which makes us ready even to lay down our lives for others.

2. We heard in the reading from Saint Paul's Letter to the Colossians that we must "put on" this love (Col. 3: 14) – we must be clothed in it, covered completely. We first put it on when we "put on

Christ" in Baptism (Rom. 13: 14). Christ's love was poured into our hearts, so that now we can love God above all things and our neighbour as our self for love of him. By the power of this love, Christians are enabled to offer all that they have and are to the Father, to proclaim the Good News by their words and deeds, and to spread everywhere God's Kingdom of justice, peace and charity (Cf. John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 14).

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council affirm that the laity are specifically called to fulfil this lofty vocation in the secular sphere, through their involvement in temporal affairs (Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 31). The Gospel images of salt and light and leaven (Cf. Mt. 5: 13-16; 13: 33) help us to understand that by means of their full participation in the affairs of this age the lay faithful are meant to be instruments enabling divine grace to accomplish God's eternal purpose in creation.

3. It is *essential that the laity should be well prepared to undertake this task*. In the work of lay formation the *parish plays a central role*. An active parish is a most effective means for teaching God's Word, for fostering liturgical and personal dialogue with God and for sustaining the life of fraternal charity. By participating in the life of the parish, the faithful experience the reality of ecclesial communion and come to appreciate more fully their own responsibility as sharers in the Church's saving mission (Cf. John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 61).

In the parish communities of Kingston, Montego Bay and Mandeville, programmes of *sacramental preparation*, other forms of *catechesis* and the *pastoral care of youth* are indispensable activities. Each of you here today has a vital part to play in this apostolate. I wish to encourage you to be close to your priests, to cooperate with them in building up the Church on this Island. By being good Catholics yourselves, you will help your priests to be ever better servants of Jesus Christ, the Supreme High Priest.

I take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the *catechists* for the important work you do in handing on the Catholic faith. Your task is to pass on to your students the Church's teaching in all its richness and integrity. Teach them especially about the sacraments and how the saving mystery of Christ is made present in these visible signs of the invisible grace of God. Through the prayerful celebration of these sacred rites the whole community will find the strength it needs for the sanctification of life in the world and for the task of overcoming all the forms of poverty – material and spiritual – which affect our brothers and sisters.

Those of you who are *teachers* have a *special responsibility* for instructing others in the virtues which are at the heart of Christian formation. Among the most important dispositions to be cultivated in both the young and in adults are solidarity and a sense of responsibility for the common good. In the last century such a commitment to the good of the human person brought about the emancipation of those enslaved in the homes, in the workshops and on the plantations of this land. Not all Jamaicans have yet attained a level of participation in society worthy of free men and women, and so there is no less a need for solidarity and commitment today. For your

generous dedication to the task of educating the young, not only the Catholic community in Jamaica but civil society as well is indebted to you.

I invite Jamaican Catholics to make this an occasion for renewing your commitment to the Church's mission. Pledge once more that *the poor and forgotten will be the particular object of your love*. Resolve to make your groups and organizations effective means of helping your brothers and sisters in their need. In this way you will be the worthy heirs to a spirit and tradition exemplified by Jessie Ripoll, Josephine Ximines, Louise Dugioli, and all those who have worked for the full development of their fellow Jamaicans.

4. Now a word to the many *young people here today*. *Young Jamaicans, will you be strong and generous for Christ?* Reject the easy road: the road of self-indulgence, crime, cynicism and escape from responsibility. The abuse of alcohol and drugs and sexual misbehaviour must have no place in your lives. "Enter by the narrow gate" (Mt. 7: 13). *Choose the road that leads to eternal life* and happiness with God. If God's road for you seems to lead towards the priesthood or the life of a Religious Sister or Brother, be generous. The Church needs you. Follow where Christ directs you. If he calls you to marriage, let Mary and Joseph be your models. In all things let the words of Jesus live in you, and you will know the joy that comes from belonging to him.

5. This year we are commemorating the fifth centenary of the beginning of evangelization in the Caribbean and in all the Americas. This celebration is an ideal occasion for the Catholics of Jamaica *to hear as if with fresh hearts and minds Christ's summons*: "The time has come and the Kingdom of God is close at hand! Repent, and believe the Good News!" (Mk. 1: 15). Yes, dear brothers and sisters, answer that call. Offer yourselves anew to the Redeemer as his helpers in freeing creation from the effects of sin, in order to restore all things according to the Father's original design for the world (Cf. John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 15). *Give your hands to Christ*, so that by his grace you can fashion a society that is just, and in which all its members live in peace. *Give your hearts to Christ*, so that through them his love may shine forth as a beacon of light and hope for all Jamaicans.

May God be your support in this wonderful work. May he bless "this land that we love". And may Mary, the Queen of the Universe, protect her beloved Jamaica. God be with you all!