



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO BOLOGNA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE
23rd ITALIAN NATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS
(SEPTEMBER 27-28, 1997)

ADDRESS TO YOUNG PEOPLE OF BOLOGNA

Saturday, 27 September 1997

Dear Young People,

1. I am pleased to take part in this vigil which is being held in a context of faith and joy where singing plays an important role. It is the young people's faith and joy which I have been able to experience already on other occasions, especially during the great world meetings with youth. And I have noted with interest that after [World Youth Day in Manila in 1995](#) came the European meeting in *Loreto*; after the recent meeting in *Paris*, we are meeting this evening in *Bologna*. It is young people who take the lead in this succession of meetings in various parts of the world. But then *we always return to Italy*. "Return" means that the Pope returns to the Vatican or to Castel Gandolfo. I take this opportunity to greet you with affection, dear young people, and I extend my cordial thoughts to all of Italy's youth.

We began our meeting, which I followed with great attention, with Psalm 96, an invitation to "sing to the Lord a new song". It invites us to bless his name, to rejoice and be glad together with all creation. Singing thus becomes the response of a heart filled with joy, which recognizes God's presence beside it.

The answers are blowing in the breath of the Holy Spirit "You have remained here, visible Mystery": you have been repeating these words throughout the National Eucharistic Congress. Faith is also expressed in song. In our life, faith makes us sing *the joy of being children of God*.

All of you, artists and young people, whom I greet affectionately, express through music and song, "on the lyres of our time", words of peace, hope and solidarity.

This evening music and poetry have spoken of the questions and ideals of your youth. This evening, by way of music, Jesus has come to meet you.

2. Dear young people, I thank you for this festive gathering which you wanted to organize as *a sort of dialogue in several voices*, where music and choreography help us to reflect and pray. A representative of yours has just said on your behalf that the answer to the questions of your life "is blowing in the wind". It is true! But not in the wind which blows everything away in empty whirls, but the wind which is the breath and voice of the Spirit, a voice that calls and says: "come!" (cf. Jn 3:8; Rv 22:17).

You asked me: *How many roads* must a man walk down before you call him a man? I answer you: *one!* There is only one road for man and it is Christ, who said: "I am the way" (Jn 14:6). He is the road of truth, the way of life.

I therefore say to you: at the crossroads where the many paths of your days intersect, question yourselves about the truth value of every choice you make. It can sometimes happen that the decision is difficult or hard, and that there is an insistent temptation to give in. This had happened to Jesus' disciples, for the world is full of easy and inviting ways, downhill roads that plunge into the shadow of the valley where the horizon becomes more and more limited and stifling. Jesus offers you an uphill road, which is heavy going but lets the eye of the heart sweep over ever broader horizons. The choice is yours: to let yourselves slide downhill into the valley of a dull conformism, or to face the effort of climbing to the peak, where you can breathe the pure air of truth, goodness and love.

We meet here in Bologna a little more than a month after the great meeting in Paris, and the theme of that World Day is still echoing within us: "Teacher, where are you staying? Come and see". This is the invitation I also address to you: come and see where the Teacher lives. This Congress in Bologna tells us that he lives in the Eucharist.

3. I hope that you too, with Simon Peter and the other disciples, can meet Christ and ask him: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (Jn 6:67).

Yes, Jesus has the words of eternal life; *everything is redeemed and renewed in him*. With him it is truly possible to "sing a new song" (Ps 96:1) at this vigil before the great feast that we will end tomorrow with the celebration of the Eucharist, the culmination of the National Eucharistic Congress.

Now I would like to tell you something personal. With the passing of time, the most important and

beautiful thing for me remains the fact that I have been a priest for more than 50 years, because every day I can *celebrate Holy Mass!* The Eucharist is the secret of my day. It gives strength and meaning to all my activities of service to the Church and to the whole world.

In a short time, when it is the dead of night, the music and singing will give way to silent adoration of the Eucharist. The music and singing will be replaced with silence and prayer. Our eyes and hearts will be fixed on the Eucharist.

Let Jesus present in the Blessed Sacrament speak to your hearts. It is he who is the true answer of life that you seek.

He stays here with us: he is God with us. Seek him *without tiring*, welcome him *without reserve*, love him *without interruption*: today, tomorrow, for ever!

Finally, I must tell you that during this vigil I have thought of all the riches that exist in the world, especially those in man: the voices, the insights, the answers, the sensitivity and many, many other talents. We must be deeply grateful for all these talents. And this gratitude means precisely the Eucharist. By giving thanks for the good things of this world, by giving thanks for all these riches, by giving thanks for all these talents, we make ourselves better able to multiply all these talents, just like the good servant in the Gospel. Good night. Praised be Jesus Christ!

I offer you all my affectionate greetings and my Blessing.

Before leaving at the end of the meeting, the Holy Father spoke extemporaneously.

So, before going, I would like to finish what I said earlier. I told you that we need the Eucharist because we need to be grateful for all these goods, for all this riches, for all these talents. A great thanksgiving is necessary. But this thanksgiving must be made through the sacrifice of the Cross; it must be made through the bloody death of Christ. If there were no death, there would be no Resurrection either, nor would there be the paschal mystery. "Mors et vita duello conflixere mirando; dux vitae mortuus regnat vivus". You all know Latin well. But some of the more learned priests will translate it for you. I wanted to tell you this to round out your vision of what the Eucharist means. Thank you for this meeting.
