



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF ITALIAN CATHOLIC ACTION**

Tuesday, 22 December 1998

1. I welcome you with joy, dear boys and girls of Catholic Action!

You have come from various Dioceses in Italy to bring the Pope the greetings of Catholic Action. I cordially thank you for your presence and your enthusiasm. I know that you really love Catholic Action, which teaches you to be generous and faithful apostles of Christ in the Church. With you I greet your teachers, leaders and the chaplains of the entire association, which has just held its 10th assembly.

2. I like the theme of your programme for this year: "*I have time for you*". It first of all reminds us of God: yes, God has time for us, and he so loved us that he sent his Son into the world. By reading the Gospel we learn how our time must be used: we must follow the example of Jesus, who lived his life with complete devotion to his heavenly Father and to his brothers and sisters. Do you remember what he did when he was more or less your age? He stayed behind at the temple in Jerusalem, and then he explained to his mother, Our Lady, and to St Joseph that his mission was to dedicate his life to his Father's affairs (cf. *Lk 2:49*). This was really his mission: to live his whole life for every man and every woman, to the point of dying on the cross.

By Baptism and Confirmation every believer is called to follow in the footsteps of the divine Master. This means a journey of continual growth. Catholic Action exists for this reason: to help you make this journey together, in the association, in the parish, in the Church. In this way you learn to devote your time and energy to others, whether near or far, like the young people whom you will probably never meet, but you consider your brothers and sisters because they are children of the one Father who is in heaven.

3. Always be faithful to Jesus, who wants you to be his disciples. I wish you a holy and peaceful Christmas, and a New Year full of good fruits. May God fill with his love each of you and all the young members of Catholic Action! I am always close to you in prayer and I bless you now with great affection. Happy Christmas!

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