



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO THE SWISS NATIONAL PILGRIMAGE

Monday, 25 September 2000

*Your Eminence,
Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,
Dear Priests and Deacons,
Dear Sisters and Dear Brothers.*

1. It is a great joy for me to see so many Swiss faithful here at the tomb of St Peter. You are all welcome. I greet in particular Cardinal Henry Schwery, the President of the Swiss Episcopal Conference, Bishop Amédée Grab, and all the Bishops present. Today's "Day of the Swiss" gives me a timely opportunity to express my gratitude to the members of the Swiss Guard. I thank them for their faithful and diligent service, which precisely in the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 is of extraordinary importance. The Swiss Guard is a living visiting card of the Vatican. Dear Swiss people, you can be proud to know that here in the Vatican there are such worthy representatives of your beloved land. Pray that in your country there will never be a lack of committed young men, ready to place themselves at the service of the Pope and of the Church!
2. Like all the Holy Year pilgrims, you too have passed through the Holy Door, which is open to all. The Holy Door is an image of Christ who said: "I am the door" (*Jn 10: 9*). Passing through the Holy Door implies an interior attitude. This must correspond to an orientation of life. Indeed, Christ is demanding. He calls people to decide. Therefore if we also cross the threshold of the Holy Door, let us repeat with the Apostle Peter: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (*Jn 6: 68*).
3. Thus the exterior rite expresses a profound profession of faith. I hope that you will return to your country, your cities and your villages strengthened in the faith, to stand beside your brothers and sisters in their daily lives. In the contemporary world, there are many doors that tempt us, but unfortunately they do not lead to either fulfilment or happiness. On the contrary, they can hurl man

into the abyss of emptiness and dependency. Those who no longer seek "the way, the truth and the life" (cf. *Jn* 14: 6), no longer find access to God. A pilgrim returning from Rome can show the way to those who are searching for a life full of meaning. I invoke for you from God strength and blessings.

4. Your Jubilee journey leads you, together with the whole Church, into a new period of grace and mission (cf. *Bull of Indiction of the Great Jubilee*, n. 3), inviting you to take an increasingly active part in the life of your Christian communities, under the guidance of your Bishops, to be witnesses among your brethren of the ecclesial and missionary communion of the Gospel. The Church enables us to be born to new life through Baptism, communicates God's gifts to us, particularly through the Eucharist and Penance, so that we can lead a new life and be constantly committed to the path of conversion, thereby reviving our spiritual lives and apostolic dynamism. I encourage you in particular to concentrate your efforts on the moral and spiritual formation of young people, to help them in their personal growth and to prepare them to be solid Christians, ready to respond joyfully to their vocation and, for those whom God calls, to commit themselves to the path of priesthood or the consecrated life. In entrusting you to Our Lady's intercession, I cordially impart an affectionate Apostolic Blessing to you all.

5. Lastly, I would like to address a greeting to the Italian-speaking Swiss pilgrims. You came to Rome to pass through the Holy Door. May this rite be a strong spiritual experience for you that will help you to welcome Christ in your lives more readily, to be his credible witnesses among your brothers and sisters at the beginning of the third millennium. I affectionately impart my Apostolic Blessing to you all.

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