



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL MEETING
"YOUNG PEOPLE TO ASSISI"**

Saturday, 18 August 2001

1. Dear young participants in the second International Meeting "Young People to Assisi", welcome! I am delighted to receive you and joyfully offer you the Gospel greeting so dear to you: "May the Lord give you peace"! You arranged to meet from so many parts of the world to reflect together, in the simplicity of Franciscan places, on the witness of two champions of the Spirit: St Francis and St Clare of Assisi.

Thank you for your pleasant visit. I greet, in particular, the Minister General of the Friars Minor Conventual, Fr Joachim Anthony Giermek, and I thank him for his words on your behalf. I greet the Friars and the Sisters who are your guides on the path of Gospel life.

The theme chosen for your international meeting is "Joy". It is a topic of great interest and timeliness, because we all need authentic, lasting joy.

2. Young Francis was called by his friends the king of parties, because he was available and generous, brilliant and likeable. Humanly he could have had many reasons to be happy yet he was missing something. He abandoned it all when he found what he needed most. He met Christ and discovered true happiness. He realized that one can only be happy by giving one's life for an ideal, building something enduring in the light of the demanding counsels of the Gospel.

Dear young people, many false teachers point out dangerous ways that lead to fleeting joys and satisfactions. Today expressions of our culture are mired in superficiality. Dear young people, in imitating Francis and Clare, refuse to sell your dreams too cheaply! Dream, but in freedom! Plan, but in truth!

The Lord is also asking you: "Will you also go away?". Answer with the Apostle Peter: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (*Jn 6,68*). God alone is the infinite horizon of your life. The more you know him, the more you will find out that only he is love and an inexhaustible source of joy.

But to enter and remain in contact with God it is indispensable to establish a deep relationship with him in prayer. When it is genuine, prayer spreads divine energy in every context and at every moment of life. It makes us live in a new way. Is it not prayer that made Francis a new man and Clare a source of light?

3. You are God's and God is yours! The awareness of belonging to God will make you, like Francis and Clare, creatures who are soothed by his presence. *"The love of God gives happiness"*, wrote St Clare in one of her letters, *"his sweetness pervades the whole soul, which is the worthiest of all creatures, it is made by the grace of God greater than Heaven. Indeed, whilst the skies with all the other created things cannot contain the Creator, the faithful soul instead, and it alone, is his dwelling place and home"* (*FF 2901; 2892*).

The soul is greater than heaven! Having understood this profound spiritual reality, Francis and Clare did not hesitate to hasten towards the peaks of holiness. Holiness is not a sort of extraordinary ascetic journey which can only be undertaken by a few "geniuses" but, as I recalled in my recent Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte*, it is the "high standard" of ordinary Christian living (cf. n. 31). Holiness is doing something beautiful for God every day, but also recognizing what he has done and continues to do in us and for us. Be holy, dear young friends, because the lack of holiness is what makes the world sad! The saints that inspire you continue to exercise an extraordinary fascination because they dedicated their whole life without interruption to Christ. And, involuntarily, they have given rise to a "revolutionary" evangelical style, which still today continues to fascinate so many young people, and not exclusively the young. You too have been captivated by the fascination of their witness and your presence at this meeting emphasizes your desire to imitate them faithfully.

4. Francis and Clare not only became brother and sister to every human being but to all animate and inanimate creatures. In contemplating nature, when Francis discovers that everything speaks to him of God, his eyes are filled with joy and he exclaims in the Canticle of Brother Sun: everything "... from you Most High, bears significance" (*FF 263*).

Dear young people, may you too learn to look at your neighbour and at creation with God's eyes. Mainly respect its summit, which is the human person. At the school of such excellent teachers, learn the careful and attentive use of goods. Do your utmost to see that they are better distributed and shared, with full respect for the rights of every person. In reading the great book of creation, may your spirit open to grateful praise to the Creator.

5. Like Clare and Francis, learn to have constant recourse to divine help. They repeat to each one of you: "Put your trust anew in the Lord and he will take care of you" (*FF* 367). Yes, dear boys and girls, trust in God! Also imitate Francis and Clare in their filial entrustment to Our Ladd and seek warmth and protection in her. Be close to Mary, our sweetest Mother, whom the Church has invoked down the centuries as "Cause of our joy". She will also be a cause of joy for you, because Mary is a caring Mother for everyone!

With this wish, I assure you of my remembrance in prayer and cordially bless you all.