



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
TO CARDINAL LUBOMYR HUSAR
ON THE OCCASION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF
THE UKRAINIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH**

*To my Venerable Brother Cardinal Lubomyr Husar
Major Archbishop of Lviv for the Ukrainians*

1. On the occasion of the important assembly of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church which is taking place in Lviv from 30 June to 6 July, a year after my unforgettable Pastoral Visit to this country, I would like to address my cordial greeting to you, to my Brothers in the Episcopate and to all the participants.

The theme chosen for your meeting is especially significant and of great importance: "*Christ, Source of the Rebirth of the Ukrainian People*". With fraternal affection I join this beloved Ecclesial Community in invoking the Holy Spirit, so that he may grant you a deeper knowledge of Christ and that your assembly's work may effectively imbue the faithful with new courage in witnessing to the message of salvation.

In my first Encyclical *Redemptor hominis*, I pointed out that Christ must occupy the central place in the life of the Church and of every Christian. Indeed, he is the Redeemer of man, the Redeemer of the world. In Christ and through Christ "God has revealed himself fully to mankind and has definitively drawn close to it; at the same time, in Christ and through Christ man has acquired full awareness of his dignity, of the heights to which he is raised, of the surpassing worth of his own humanity, and of the meaning of his existence" (n. 11). The Church's mission, therefore, is to announce the mystery of Christ to everyone, under the constant action of the Holy Spirit, to ensure that it may be effective and fruitful for every person.

2. "*At your word, I will let down the nets*" (Lk 5,5). The Christian community grows and is renewed principally through listening to Christ's word. The long years of atheism, during which an effort was made to blot out the Christian values which distinguish the history of the Ukrainian people, have left their mark on the people's mind and behaviour. Today, in addition, we have the erosive action

of the process of secularization with its essentially material vision of life, combined with the unbridled quest for a well-being that is often here today and gone tomorrow. These are the perils that frequently characterize Western societies today and hamper the daily effort to witness consistently to the "good news" of the faith.

In this context, your Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church appropriately intends to redouble the evangelization work it has been carrying out in recent years. In my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte*, I invited believers to draw nourishment from the Word in order to be "servants of the Word" in the commitment to evangelization, and I recalled that this is certainly one of the Church's priorities at the beginning of the new millennium (cf. n. 40). Christ's invitation "*Duc in altum*", is also addressed to each member of this Church so that, strong in the presence of the Lord, he may pass on clearly to those around him the perennial message of the Gospel, the Good News that in Jesus, "the Way, the Truth and the Life" (Jn 14,6), one can encounter the accepting and merciful love of the Father. To bring this work to completion it will be necessary to foster a solid formation of the clergy, a thorough catechesis for young people and adults, and an increasingly informed participation of the faithful in the liturgy, the source and summit of the life of the Church (cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 10).

You have before you the shining example of the martyrs and confessors of faith who did not hesitate to pay with their lives for fidelity to Christ and his Church. They are a constant lesson for everyone. Yes, the land of Ukraine, bathed in the blood of her martyrs, has given the world an example of invincible fidelity to the Gospel!

3. You can draw on this spiritual heritage in order to continue with apostolic and missionary enthusiasm, keeping alive before your eyes the icon of Jesus who stoops to wash the Apostles' feet.

Through humble service your Church should seek to transmit the Gospel of charity and joy. In contemporary society, in which the quest for power, success at any price, and selfishness that make people unaware of their neighbour's needs seem to have the upper hand, every ecclesial community is called to proclaim and to witness to respect for the dignity of every human being, created in the image and likeness of God, and to exercise authority, not as domination, but as service in the evangelical logic of the divine Teacher who came not to be served but to serve (cf. Mk 10,45).

Aware of this, your assembly will not fail to focus attention on families, mindful of the difficulties they are unfortunately encountering in Ukraine too, where the divorce rate is growing and the scourge of abortion spreading.

As well as to families, priority must be given to the pastoral care of young people, who are the Church's hope and future, and they must be helped to rediscover the religious roots of the culture

they belong to. Show them that only in Christ can they find the response that will answer the questions in their hearts; help them feel that they have a principal role to play in the spiritual and material rebuilding of the country, whilst remaining faithful to the Gospel and its shining spiritual values.

Your Church is generously investing energy and means in the formation of the new generations. May she courageously present Christ and the Gospel to them, "*sine glossa*" (without comment).

Only in this way will the world of youth be able to overcome the temptation to be taken in by the deceptive mirages and misleading models imposed by materialism and hedonism.

4. The apostolic field in which the Lord calls your Church to be present and active is immense. Venerable Brother, as I assure you of my spiritual closeness to the Greek Catholic faithful of Ukraine, I invite you and the whole assembly to listen once again to Christ's words: "*that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us*" (Jn 17,21). This prayer, which Jesus addressed to God the Father at the last moments of his earthly life, is "a binding imperative, the strength that sustains us, and a salutary rebuke for our slowness and closed-heartedness" (*Novo Millennio ineunte*, n. 48).

A host of misunderstandings and divisions have marked the history of the Church in Ukraine. The time has come to redouble efforts to achieve understanding and communion, first of all between the Catholics of the two rites. It will also be important to increase the commitment to bring about closeness and reconciliation with other Christians, and especially with the Orthodox brethren. May your Church's Eastern identity and full communion with the Successor of Peter help you find ever new paths of dialogue, solidarity and collaboration with the Orthodox Churches. I am sure that the personal and community process of conversion to Christ and to his Gospel, to which the Second Vatican Council invites everyone (cf. *Unitatis redintegratio*, n. 7), will hasten the coming of that full unity which Christ wanted for his disciples.

5. Greek Catholic Church of Ukraine, a future rich in hope lies before you! It may be strewn with problems and disappointments, but do not be afraid! The Lord is close to you. The Blessed Mother of God, who shared in the suffering of her Son's death on the Cross, but was also a joyful witness of his glorious Resurrection, accompanies you. May her maternal help make the work of your assembly fruitful, for the benefit of the entire People of God.

With these sentiments and with deep affection, I very willingly impart a special Blessing to you, Venerable Brother, to those who are taking part in the Assembly of the Greek Catholic Church of Ukraine, and to all the other faithful of your country, which is so dear to me.

From the Vatican, 25 June 2002.

JOHN PAUL II

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