



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE BISHOPS FROM CHILE
ON THEIR AD LIMINA VISIT**

Tuesday, 15 October 2002

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

1. I am happy to receive you, Pastors of the Church in Chile, during this *ad limina* visit in which you have come to the tombs of St Peter and St Paul, renewing the faith in Jesus Christ, passed down by the Apostles and which, as their successors, you are responsible for preserving. You have also come to Rome to revive the bonds of communion with the Successor of Peter and to increase your "concern for all the Churches" (*Christus Dominus*, n. 6).

I am grateful to Cardinal Francisco Javier Errázuriz, Archbishop of Santiago and President of the Bishops' Conference, for the cordial words he used as your spokesman to express your sentiments of affection and loyalty to the Bishop of Rome, the See "in which the primacy of the apostolic Cathedra has always resided" (St Augustine, Ep. 43, 3), and to share your main anxieties and pastoral experiences.

In meeting you and encouraging you in your tireless pastoral work, I greet the Chilean people to whom I feel close. I retain a happy memory of my meetings with them when I visited them in their own land, and experienced the deep roots of Christian faith in your people and their affection and fidelity to their Pastors and to the Apostolic See. A beautiful expression of it are the many fruits of holiness in your land, such as St Teresa of the Andes, Bl. Laura Vicuña and Bl. Alberto Hurtado, for whom you are observing the 50th anniversary of his holy death.

2. These memories are a source of inspiration and hope for your pastoral work at the present time, at the beginning of this new millennium marked by rapid changes in many walks of life, and by the great challenge of the phenomenon of globalization. At times one can discern serious financial,

technical and cultural threats to the weakest nations, but one can also perceive elements that can offer new opportunities for growth.

Let us hope that the Chilean people's efforts to be integrated into the global world will not lead to their losing their cultural identity, not letting everything be reduced to an economic exchange, but that it will allow you to take everywhere the best values of your wonderful country, linked strongly to its Catholic tradition. This will enrich the multicultural ambience that becomes more widespread with attitudes of mutual respect and will encourage a dialogue that enthusiastically seeks the truth, avoiding the superficiality and relativism that promote indifference and ruin social coexistence.

The Catholic universities and schools, that, thanks be to God, are numerous in Chile, must contribute to this. I am sure that the Bishops will continue to follow them with great attention, because they are destined to bring to Chilean society the saving leaven of Christ's Gospel.

3. Today it is necessary to illuminate the people's way with Christian principles, profiting by the opportunities that the current situation offers to develop a genuine evangelization which, with new language and striking symbols, will make the message of Jesus Christ easier to understand for the men and women of today. For this reason, it is important, as you yourselves have said, that at the beginning of the new millennium, the Church should inspire hope, so that all the changes of the present time may truly be turned into a renewed encounter with the living Christ, who will call your people to conversion and solidarity.

Taking into account the fact that Christian Revelation leads to a "deeper understanding of the laws of social living with which the Creator has endowed man's spiritual and moral nature" (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 23), the Church, with her own mission in society, must not withdraw from the task of accompanying and guiding the processes underway in your country to reform crucial aspects of the common good such as education, health care and the administration of justice, watching to ensure that they serve the advancement of citizens, particularly, the weakest and neediest.

4. I know and appreciate all you are doing for the family, which is facing many kinds of problems and is subjected to snares that attack the essential aspects of God's plan, such as the indissolubility of marriage. Your efforts, which render a valuable service to your country, must also be accompanied by an integral pastoral service to the family, that includes the preparation of engaged couples for marriage, supports them afterwards, especially when problems arise, and guides them in the education of their children.

In this perspective, nothing can make up for a true culture of life, a profound experience of fidelity and a deep-rooted spirit of self-sacrifice, about which the Word of God and the Magisterium of the Church enormously enlighten human life. Evangelizing families does mean presenting to the husband and wife the infinite love of Christ for his Church, that they must reflect in this world (cf. Eph 5,31f.). You must also instill in family members the vocation to holiness to which they are

called, without being afraid to propose lofty ideals which, though at times may seem difficult to realize, are those which respond to the divine plan of salvation.

5. The experience lived during the recent World Youth Day, observed in Toronto, makes me recall also the Continental Youth Meeting that took place several years ago in Santiago. You played a leading role in that great gathering of your people, sure of their generosity and of their enthusiastic collaboration. As I told them in my Message, "I know that your hearts are pounding with a deep desire for service to your neighbour and for solidarity" (*First Continental Youth Meeting, Santiago, Chile, 10 October 1998; ORE, 11 November 1998, p. 8*), which will require the guidance and confidence of their Pastors, if it is to be transformed into a living meeting with Christ and a decisive plan to follow his Gospel faithfully, to spread it joyfully in Chilean society and throughout the world.

In fact, despite the many enticements that are an invitation to hedonism, mediocrity or instant success, young people are not easily put off by the difficulties and for that reason are therefore particularly sensitive to radical demands and commitment without reservations when one presents the true path of life to them. That it is an uphill path does not worry them, if they discover Christ who went before them and is ready to go again with them (cf. *Address during the welcoming ceremony, Toronto, 25 July 2002, n. 3; ORE, 31 July, p. 5*). For young people who are full of initiative, the most important thing is to be the builders and artisans of life and of the world they are looking out on. Thus they need to hear from you, without doubts or reservations about the values of the Gospel, their moral duties and the need for divine grace implored in prayer and received in the sacraments, how to "build, brick by brick, the city of God within the city of man" (*Prayer Vigil, Toronto, 27 July 2002, n. 4; ORE, 31 July 2002, p. 7*).

6. As on other occasions, I warmly commend to you the priests, your principal collaborators in the pastoral ministry. They need well-organized programmes of continuing formation, especially in the areas of theology, spirituality, pastoral life and the social teaching of the Church, which will enable them to be competent evangelizers and worthy ministers of the Church in contemporary society. Indeed, for the majority of the People of God, they are the immediate channel through which the Gospel reaches them, and the most immediate image through which they perceive the mystery of the Church.

For this reason their intellectual and doctrinal formation must always be joined with the witness of an exemplary life, close communion with the Bishops, fraternal relations with their fellow priests, affability in their contact with others, a spirit of communion with all the ecclesial groups of their communities and that style of spiritual peace and apostolic zeal that only constant contact with the Master can create and keep alive. Like the disciples spoken of in Luke's Gospel, they must feel overwhelming joy in the marvels Jesus works through them (cf. Lk 19,7), in this way joining their personal witness to their proclamation and the example of their lives to their teaching.

So that priests may feel your presence close to them, it is of great importance that you always deal

with them personally, "ready to listen to them and cultivate an atmosphere of easy familiarity with them" (*Christus Dominus*, n. 16), showing interest in the daily problems that can burden them and making them see how precious in the eyes of God and of the Church is their daily, self-sacrificing work, "that is often hidden and, without making headlines, causes the Kingdom of God to advance in people's minds and hearts" (*Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday 2001*, n. 3).

All this will turn to the benefit of the pastoral care of vocations which must be decisive, continuous and rigorous, but which will find an irreplaceable support in the attraction that those who radiate the joy of having given their whole life to God and to the service of the Church exercise on young people.

Moreover, the promotion of vocations must always be a primary commitment for every Bishop in his diocese, by prayer and action designed for this end, as I myself stressed in the Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis* and on many other occasions.

7. The beginning of this millennium, which brings Chile to the second centenary of its independence, presents to the Church and to all citizens, the crucial challenge of a successful, fully reconciled society, which, without hiding the truth, must be able to make room for forgiveness, "*which heals and rebuilds troubled human relations from their foundations*" (*Message for World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2002, n. 3).

The Church, whose mission is to be the instrument of reconciliation of humanity with God and with one another, must be "*the home and school of communion*" (*Novo Millennio ineunte*, n. 43), in which people can appreciate and welcome what is positive in others and which makes no one feel excluded.

The attitude of marginalization that prompts people to pass by on the other side of the road to avoid the brother or sister in need (cf. Lk 10,31) since it might be a nuisance or unproductive, is the negative aspect of present day social models. The Church is especially committed to reminding everyone that it is precisely the neediest who must not be considered the insignificant residue of a progress that is only concerned with what entails success, the unlimited accumulation of goods and superior positions.

8. At the end of this meeting, I ask you to convey my affection and spiritual closeness to your ecclesial communities. Please express my gratitude to the priests and to the communities of men and women religious who work so generously to proclaim and to witness to the Kingdom of God in Chile, and to the catechists and other pastoral workers involved in the work of evangelization. Convey the Pope's thanks to the people and institutions dedicated to charitable work and solidarity with the neediest, since this is one of the great challenges for the life of the Church in the new millennium (cf. *Novo Millennio ineunte*, nn. 49-50).

I entrust your pastoral concerns to the Blessed Virgin Mary, with the title of Our Lady of Carmel of Maipú, and fervently implore her to guide her beloved sons and daughters of Chile to meet Christ, the source of life and truth, who will help them to live in this beautiful land as brothers and sisters, and to intercede with her Divine Son so that the country may prosper, in peace and harmony in accord with the best values of its Christian tradition. To you and to the faithful of each one of the particular Churches you preside over I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.