



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS
OF THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION
OF "YOUNG PEOPLE TO ASSISI"**

Saturday, 9 August 2003

*Dearest young people,*¹ I greet you affectionately on the occasion of the "Young People to Assisi" International Convention, which has brought you from many parts of the world to gather around the figure and the message of St Francis. I wish to greet Fr Joachim Giermek, Minister General, whom I thank for his courteous words outlining the essential content of your "Meeting". Together with him I also greet the dear Conventual Fathers who are accompanying you on an evocative pilgrimage to some of the most ancient Franciscan Shrines. During these days of reflection and brotherhood, you have the opportunity to rediscover the fascination of places that today still bear testimony to the presence of the *Poverello* of Assisi. In particular, you have been able to deepen the content of the well-known prayer of Francis in front of the Cross of St Damian, and especially the significance of the invocation: "Enlighten my heart" (cf. *Fonti Francescane*, 276). From the contemplation of the suffering face of Christ crucified, the young Francis drew the experience of that profound communion with Jesus that led him toward the purpose of his earthly existence, to conform himself to the utmost degree with the Lord, so much so that he bore the signs of the Passion impressed on his own body.² Dear participants at the *Third International Meeting of "Young People to Assisi"!* I wish to renew to you the invitation I gave to the entire Church at the beginning of the new millennium: contemplate the face of Christ, his dying face and the face of the risen One! "Jesus' cry on the Cross... is not the cry of anguish of a man without hope, but the prayer of the Son who offers his life to the Father in love, for the salvation of all" (Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 26). It is necessary to welcome this message of hope in one's own life and to proclaim to the world this revelation full of God's love, as the Minister General aptly recalled. Following the example of Francis, you will also learn to look with faith at the face of the Crucified One and to see reflected there the suffering of humanity. May the Cross of St Damian, which also accompanies you today, revive in you the light that "enlightens the heart" and guide your pilgrimage all the way to Cologne, where in 2005 the World Youth Day will be held, ever ready to proclaim and witness to the Gospel. Is not this Francis' invitation as well as the experience of Clare of Assisi, the 750th anniversary of whose death occurs in these days?³ Contemplating the face of Christ, you will be able to experience the fruits of his Passion and Resurrection and be capable of receiving those suffering from sickness, violence, hatred and injustice. As Francis encountered Christ through solidarity and service to the poor and lepers (cf. *Testamento*, 1-3: *Fonti Francescane*, 110; *Legenda Maior*, 5: *Fonti Francescane*, 1034-1035), so too you, faithfully following his example, will be able to welcome the Redeemer and to

serve him with generous dedication in every suffering and marginalized person. May the Lord grant you "wisdom and discernment" in order to be able to comprehend his will to the very depths and to translate it into appropriate life choices. I accompany you with affection and prayer and I invoke on you and on the communities that you come from the maternal protection of the Virgin Mary, whom Franciscans invoke with the beautiful title of "St Mary of the Angels". I bless all of you from the heart, together with your families and your friends. *At the conclusion, the Holy Father greeted the Polish youth present with the following words:* I also greet and salute the participants who have come from Wadowice. I thank all of you for coming.

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