



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO SPAIN

MEETING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II

Air Base of Cuatro Vientos in Madrid

Saturday, 3 May 2003 1. Led by the hand of the Virgin Mary and accompanied by the example and intercession of the new Saints, we have revisited in prayer several moments in the life of Jesus. Indeed, in its simplicity and depth the Rosary is a *true compendium of the Gospel* and leads to the very heart of the Christian message: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3: 16). Mary, in addition to being our Mother who is close, discreet and understanding, is the best Teacher for achieving knowledge of the truth through contemplation. *The drama of contemporary culture is the lack of interiority*, the absence of contemplation. Without interiority culture has no content; it is like a body that has not yet found its soul. What can humanity do without interiority? Unfortunately, we know the answer very well. *When the contemplative spirit is missing, life is not protected* and all that is human is denigrated. Without interiority, modern man puts his own integrity at risk. 2. Dear young people, I invite you to be part of the "School of the Virgin Mary". She is the incomparable model of contemplation and wonderful example of fruitful, joyful and enriching interiority. She will teach you *never to separate action from contemplation*, so as to contribute to making a great dream come true: the birth of the new Europe in the spirit. *A Europe that is faithful to its Christian roots*, not closed in on itself but open to dialogue and collaboration with the other peoples of the earth; a Europe aware that it is called *to be the beacon of civilization and an incentive to progress* for the world, determined to combine its efforts and its creativity to serve peace and solidarity among peoples. 3. Beloved young people, you know well how concerned I am for peace in the world. The spiral of violence, terrorism and war still causes hatred and death, even in our day. Peace, as we know, is first of all *a gift from on High for which we must constantly ask* and which, furthermore, we must all build together by means of a profound inner conversion. Consequently, today I want to exhort you to *work to build peace and be artisans of peace*. Respond to blind violence and inhuman hatred with the fascinating power of love. *Overcome enmity with the force of forgiveness*. Keep far away from any form of exasperated nationalism, racism and intolerance. Witness with your life that *ideas are not imposed but proposed*. Never let yourselves be discouraged by evil! For this you will need the help of prayer and the consolation that is born from an intimate friendship with Christ. Only in this way, living the experience of God's love and radiating Gospel fellowship, will you be able to be the builders of a better

world, genuine peaceful and peacemaking men and women.⁴ Tomorrow I will have the joy of canonizing five new Saints, sons and daughters of this noble Nation and of this Church. They "were young like you, full of energy, joy and love of life. Their encounter with Christ transformed their lives.... Thus, they were enabled to attract other young people, their friends, and to create associations for prayer, evangelization and charity which still endure" (*Message to the Spanish Bishops on the occasion of the Holy Father's Apostolic Visit*, n. 4). Dear young people, go forward with confidence to meet Jesus! And like the new Saints, *do not be afraid to talk about him!* For Christ is the true answer to all questions about man and his destiny. You young people must become *the apostles of your peers*. I know well that this is not easy. You will often be tempted to say like the Prophet Jeremiah: "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth" (Jer 1: 6). Do not be disheartened for you are not alone: the Lord will always accompany you, with his grace and the gift of his Spirit.⁵ The Lord's faithful presence makes you capable of taking on the commitment of the new evangelization, to which all the Church's children are called. It is a task for all. *Lay people play a lead role* in it, especially husbands and wives and Christian families; nevertheless, today evangelization urgently needs priests and consecrated persons. This is why I want to say to each one of you, young people: if you hear the call of God that says to you: "Follow me!" (Mk 2: 14; Lk 5: 27), do not silence his call. Be generous, respond like Mary, offering God the joyful "yes" of yourself and your life. I give you my own witness: I was ordained a priest when I was 26 years old. Fifty-six years have passed since then. So how old is the Pope? Almost 83! A young man of 83! Looking back and remembering those years of my life, I can assure you that *it is worthwhile dedicating oneself to the cause of Christ* and, out of love for him, devoting oneself to serving humanity. It is worthwhile to give one's life for the Gospel and for one's brothers and sisters! How many hours are there still to go until midnight? Three hours. Just three hours until midnight and then comes morning.⁶ To conclude, I would like to call on Mary, the shining star that announces the Sun that is born from on High, Jesus Christ: Hail, Mary, full of grace!

This evening I pray to you for the youth of Spain,
young people full of dreams and hopes. They are the dawn watchmen,
the people of the beatitudes;
they are the living hope of the Church and of the Pope. Holy Mary, Mother of the young,
intercede so that they may be *witnesses* of the Risen Christ,
humble and courageous *apostles* of the third millennium,
generous *heralds* of the Gospel. Holy Mary, Immaculate Virgin,
pray *with us*,
pray *for us*. Amen.