



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE YOUTH MISSION
IN THE DIOCESE OF ROME
WITH THE THEME "JESUS AT THE CENTRE"**

Saturday, 9 October 2004

Dear Young People,

1. I am delighted to welcome you as the *Mission* to adolescents and youth with the particularly beautiful and demanding title: "*Jesus at the Centre*", comes to a close, together with the Meeting of representatives of European youth groups for Eucharistic Adoration.

I greet you all with affection! I thank especially Cardinal Camillo Ruini for the courteous words with which he has explained the value and objectives of these initiatives organized by the Diocesan Service for the Youth Apostolate of Rome. I extend my cordial greeting to the Bishops and priests present, as well as to all those who in various sectors have enlivened the celebrations, meetings and events of these days.

2. The *Year of the Eucharist* is now on our threshold and these pastoral initiatives that have involved the participation of a great many young people of Italy, Europe and the United States of America introduce us into this *special season of grace* for the whole Church.

Eucharist and mission are two inseparable realities, as the Apostle Paul stresses: "*Every time, then, you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes*" (1 Cor 11: 26). The Eucharist, in fact, is the memorial of the redemptive offering of Jesus to the Father for the salvation of humankind. Through his sacrifice on the Cross, Jesus "makes" the Eucharist, that is, he gives thanks to the Father. This mystery asks each one of us to thank the Father with Christ, not so much with words as rather with our life itself, united to his.

3. Consequently, there is no authentic celebration and adoration of the Eucharist that does not lead to mission. At the same time, *the mission presupposes another essential Eucharistic trait: union of hearts*. The mission that you are celebrating in Rome in these days is an example of communion among a multitude of lay youth groups of the Diocese of Rome: parishes, priests, men and women religious and seminarians. Precisely because you have shared in the preparations for these initiatives and their realization, you have played the lead in experiences that will mark you deeply, and not only you but also many of your peers whom you met at schools, in squares, on streets, in hospitals and churches.

I hope that this beautiful pastoral experience, *an authentic school of communion and of the new evangelization*, will continue and expand. I encourage you to see that the creativity and generosity demonstrated in these days become an incentive for the entire Church of Rome to keep her missionary spirit alive.

4. On this special occasion I would like to give you some advice. First of all, *love for the Eucharist*. Never tire of celebrating and adoring the Eucharist together with the whole Christian community, especially on Sundays, making it the centre of your personal and community life so that communion with Christ will help you make courageous decisions.

Secondly, *missionary enthusiasm*. Do not be afraid to account for the hope that is in you (cf. I Pt 3: 15), a hope that has a very precise name: Jesus Christ! You will communicate this hope to your peers by seeking them out, offering them true friendship and acceptance, and leading them to discover the great gift of the Eucharist.

5. Lastly, to facilitate the encounter of the world of youth with a true Eucharistic spirituality, never tire of *learning at the school of listening to the Word of God, prayer and the celebration of the sacraments*. Always remember that the first place for evangelization is the human person, towards whom the Eucharist impels us, asking us to be able to listen and to love. Thus, your friends too, like Mary, "Woman of the Eucharist" (cf. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, n. 53), will be able to welcome in their hearts the Word made flesh who came to dwell among us. To this end, I urge the Diocesan Service for the Youth Apostolate to examine new ideas in order to create true and proper schools of evangelization for young people.

As you continue on the *journey of preparation for the 20th World Youth Day*, whose theme will be "We have come to worship him" (Mt 2: 2), I hope from this moment that this Meeting will be a new opportunity for you to make comparisons with one another, to offer one another support, to delve more deeply into the Mystery you celebrate and worship, and to seek together the ways and means to live it out in practice.

6. Dear young people! *Thank you for all that you are and for all that you do for Christ and for the Church*. I assure you of my remembrance to the Lord during the celebration of Holy Mass and

during Eucharistic Adoration, which I have kept up without fail since I was young. Know that *I have always found in it great fruits of good*, not only for me personally, but also for all those whom Divine Mercy has entrusted to my care.

I bless you with affection, together with all the people you have met in these days and all your friends. May Jesus always be the centre of your life!