



The Holy See

VISIT TO THE PONTIFICAL SCOTS COLLEGE *HOMILY OF POPE JOHN PAUL II* Sunday, 3 June

1984 Dear Brothers in Christ, 1. It was just two years ago at this time that I had the joy of being in Scotland. And it seems to me that the words which I spoke in Bellahouston Park I can now repeat to you, the students and staff of the Pontifical Scots College: "Today marks another significant moment in the history of our salvation: the Successor of Peter comes to visit the spiritual children of Andrew! We are bound one to another by a supernatural brotherhood stronger than that of blood. Here and now we testify that we profess that identical faith in Jesus (the faith of Andrew), and we firmly hope that we too can lead others to him. This common profession of faith is the compelling motive behind my pastoral visit" (Ioannis Pauli PP. II, *Homilia in «Bellahouston Park» occasione celebrationis liturgicae habita*, 1, die 1 iun. 1982: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, V, 2 (1982) 2064). *To lead others to Jesus* explains why my predecessor Clement VIII established this College in 1600, and it explains why each of you came here. And today I have come in order to be with you and *to profess together with you our faith in Jesus and in the mystery of his Ascension into heaven.* 2. Today the Church celebrates the life that Jesus lives in heaven with his Father and in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Today the Church proclaims the glory of Christ her Head, and the hope that fills the entire Mystical Body. In the mystery of the Ascension the Church meditates on the immense love that the Father has for the Son: "He has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all" (*Eph.* 1, 22-23). Precisely because we are the Body of Christ, *we share the heavenly life of our Head.* The Ascension of Jesus is the triumph of humanity, because humanity is united with God for ever, and for ever glorified in the person of the Son of God. Christ in glory will never allow himself to be separated from his Body. We are already united with him in his heavenly life because he has gone before us as our Head. Moreover, Christ confirms our right to be with him, and from his throne of grace he constantly infuses life - his own life - into our souls. And the instrument that he uses to do so is his own glorified humanity, with which we are united through faith and the sacraments. Not only do we - the Church - share in the life of the glorified Head, but *Christ the Head fully shares the pilgrim life of his Body* and directs it and channels it to its rightful end in heavenly glory. And the more, my brothers, that you are united with Christ in the mystery of his Ascension - *Quae sursum sunt quaerite!* - the more sensitive you will be to the needs of Christ's members who struggle in faith to acquire the vision of God's countenance in glory. 3. From his place of glory Jesus is for ever our Mediator with the Father and he communicates to his Body the strength to live, as he does, totally for the Father. Exalted at God's right hand as Leader and Saviour, Jesus dispenses forgiveness to humanity (Cf. *Act.* 5, 31). *In the mystery of his Ascension Jesus fulfills the priestly role assigned to him by his Father:* to intercede for his members, "since he always lives to make intercession for them" (*Hebr.* 7, 25). In reflecting on the Ascension of the Lord, you will find yourselves confirmed in your own vocation as intercessor for God's people, in particular in your native Scotland. By the power inherent in the liturgical celebration of the glorified Christ you will be able to fulfill worthily his *last command of evangelization, given before the Ascension:* "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy

Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (*Matth. 28, 19-20*). There is a real connection between the grace that Jesus infuses into your hearts today and your future mission as heralds of his Gospel. No apostle can forget that the Ascension is linked to the fact that the Holy Spirit will come, and that Christ will continue to be present in word and sacrament. Your whole mission to make Christ present. The responsibility for the future of the Church in Scotland falls on your shoulders and those of your fellow-young people. But you can be sure that the glorified Christ will sustain you in your mission. *The victory and triumph of his Ascension* and of his exaltation at the right hand of the Father *will be communicated to future generations in the Church through you* and through your proclamation of his mystery. What a wonderful call you have received! What an exhilarating way to spend the only life you have!⁴ Under so many aspects the Solemnity of the Ascension is something very personal for you. In revealing himself in glory, Jesus strengthens *your faith in his divinity*. He summons you to believe in him, who has been taken from your sight. At the same time the feast also becomes for you *a celebration of hope and confidence* because you have accepted the angels' proclamation and you are absolutely convinced that "this Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven" (*Act. 1, 11*). In the meanwhile you know that he remains with you, that he sends his Holy Spirit to dwell in his Church and that through the Church to speak to you and direct your hearts. You are confident because you know that "he will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him" (*Hebr. 9, 28*). The more your thoughts turn to the glorified Christ in heaven, the more you realize how all wisdom, holiness and justice belong to him and are found in him. And thus the feast becomes *an occasion for great humility*. Redemption and sanctification are due to his action and his word. His revealed plan of salvation transcends all human wisdom and elicits profound reverence and respect. *Before the mystery of divine revelation human inadequacy becomes so evident*. The human mind with its noble process of reasoning appears in all its limitations, and with its need to be assisted by the mystery of the Church's Magisterium, through which *the Spirit of the living Christ supplies the certainty which the human mind can never guarantee*. And for this too the Church prays with Saint Paul in this her liturgy of the Ascension, that you may receive from God a spirit of wisdom and perception of what he himself reveals in the Church (Cf. *Eph. 1, 17*). Yes, from his throne of glory the Incarnate Word directs and forms you as you prepare for his priesthood.⁵ Yours is a great privilege: *to be in Rome* and to be formed here in the apostolic faith, *so that you can go back and proclaim the mystery of Christ* in all its purity and power to your fellow Scots. This is the privilege and tradition that you share with Saint Ninian, the Protobishop of Scotland. Centuries before you, he walked the path that you are called to follow, and all Scotland in has been blessed by his fidelity, as it will be blessed by yours. Saint Ninian's lasting contribution has been beautifully expressed: "Born of our Scottish race / God led thee forth by grace / To find in Rome / That pearl so richly priced / That faultless creed of Christ / And bear it home". In the power of the Lord's Ascension, which is your strength today, rededicate yourselves, dear brothers, *to your priestly work, to your special call*: to consecrate your youth and your entire lives to proclaiming and building up the Kingdom of heaven, thus giving glory to him who reigns for ever at the right hand of the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit. And remember: "To find in Rome... that faultless creed of Christ and bear it home". And may our Blessed Mother Mary, associated in her own glorious Assumption with the triumph of her Son, sustain you as you wait in joyful hope for *the Coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ*. Amen © Copyright 1984 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana