



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATION FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

*Central Park, New York
Saturday, 7 October 1995*

"Come Holy Spirit...!"

Dear Brothers and Sisters, my friends in Christ,

1. Today's liturgy is full of references to the Holy Spirit. Even as we pray for the Spirit to come among us, he is already here. He is here in so many of you. He is here above all in the action of the Mass, the most sacred rite of our Faith. You are here, I trust, not out of simple curiosity to see the Pope, but because of the Mass, because *the Holy Spirit is leading us all to Christ!*

For me it is a great joy to look out at so many wonderful people; and to greet Cardinal O'Connor and all the Cardinals and Bishops of the Province and elsewhere; as well as all the priests, religious and laity of the Archdiocese, the representatives of various religious denominations and the civil authorities of the State and City of New York. My warm and affectionate greetings go to the sick and the handicapped among us. And it is especially wonderful to see *so many young people*. I can hardly believe we are not back in Denver, which was such an enriching experience. So many thousands of young people astonished everyone with their spirit and their faith. I remember clearly that many people wondered and worried that the young people of America would not come to the World Youth Day, or, if they did come, that they would be a problem. Instead, the young people's joy, their hunger for the truth, their desire to be united all together in the Body of Christ, made clear to everyone that many, very many young people of America have

values and ideals which seldom make the headlines. Is it any wonder that the Pope loves you!

El Papa ama también a los hijos e hijas de la Iglesia de lengua española. Muchos de ustedes han nacido aquí o han vivido mucho tiempo aquí. Otros han llegado más recientemente. Pero todos llevan las huellas de su herencia cultural, profundamente arraigadas en la tradición católica. Conserven vivas esa fe y esa cultura.

I know this is not Denver; this is New York! The *great* New York! This is Central Park. The beautiful surroundings of Central Park invite us to reflect on a more sublime beauty: the beauty of every human being, made in the image and likeness of God (Cf. Gen. 1: 26), and the beauty that is *God living in our hearts through the Holy Spirit*. At Denver we meditated on this new life: "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (Jn. 10: 10). In Manila, last January, millions of young people gathered to meditate on how that new life in the Holy Spirit makes us apostles of Christ's kingdom: "As the Father has sent me, so am I sending you" (Ibid. 20: 21). Now, today, here in Central Park we are continuing the same spiritual pilgrimage, getting ready for the next World Youth Day, in Paris in 1997. I am very grateful for all that is being done in parishes and Dioceses all over the world to bring young people into the spirit of this great spiritual pilgrimage across the world, which started in Rome in 1984, then brought us to Buenos Aires in Argentina, to Santiago de Compostela in Spain, to Jasna Góra and Częstochowa in Poland, to Denver, to Manila, and next to Paris. At the ecumenical level, a similar spiritual pilgrimage is made at Taizé in France. The driving force of all this movement of young people is always the Holy Spirit.

2. The Spirit of God who, we are told in the Book of Genesis, breathed upon the waters at the very beginning of creation (Cf. Gen. 1: 2), is the same *Spirit of life* who was breathed into man, so that "man became a living being" (Ibid. 2: 7). This is what makes us different from every other creature. In our bodies we are a mere speck in the vast created universe, but by virtue of our souls we transcend the whole material world. I invite you to *reflect on what makes each one of you truly marvellous and unique*. Only a human being like you can think and speak and share your thoughts in different languages with other human beings all over the world, and through that language express the beauty of art and poetry and music and literature and the theatre, and so many other uniquely human accomplishments.

And most important of all, only God's precious human beings are capable of *loving*. Love makes us seek what is good; love makes us better persons. It is love that prompts men and women to marry and form a family, to have children. It is love that prompts others to embrace the religious life or become priests. Love makes you reach out to others in need, whoever they are, wherever they are. Every genuine human love is a reflection of the Love that is God himself, to the point where the First Letter of Saint John says: "The man without love has known nothing of God; for God is love" (1Jn. 4: 8).

3. Today is the *Feast of the Holy Rosary* of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The readings of the Mass

introduce us to the first three Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary, three fundamental moments of salvation history, three stages along the way of the Holy Spirit's creative passage through human history: the Annunciation, the Visitation and the Birth of Jesus. In the first reading, Saint Paul writes to the Galatians: *"But when the designated time had come, God sent forth his Son born of a woman"* (Gal. 4: 4). In these few words Saint Paul tells us what Saint Luke describes at greater length in the Gospel: the visit of the Archangel Gabriel to a virgin named Mary, in the town of Nazareth in Galilee. He invites her to become the Mother of the Redeemer. The Gospel tells us not only that Mary was surprised and confused by the words of the angel, but that *she was afraid*. Yes, Mary was afraid, just as we are often afraid! And the angel said, *"Do not fear, Mary. For you have found favor with God"* (Lk. 1: 30). It is the power of the Most High that will come upon you, and by the power of the Holy Spirit you will become the Mother of the Son of God (Cf. *ibid.* 1: 35-37).

If the creative power of God is at work at the moment of conception of every human being, in the Annunciation the Spirit accomplished something incomparably greater. In the womb of the Virgin Mary the Spirit created a man, to be born nine months later in Bethlehem, who, from the first moment of his conception, was the Eternal Son of the Father, the Word through whom all things visible and invisible were made (Cf. Jn. 1: 3) – Eternal Wisdom, the Archetype of everything that exists in creation.

4. When Mary realized who it was that was calling her, all fear was banished and she replied: *"I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say"* (Lk. 1: 38). And at that instant, she became the Mother of the Son of God. This is the extraordinary truth that we meditate on in the first Mystery of the Rosary, the Annunciation.

All this happened so that, as Saint Paul says, *we might be redeemed and might receive adoption as God's sons and daughters* (Cf. Gal. 4: 5). In Christ, the Holy Spirit makes us God's beloved children. The Incarnation of the Son of God happened once, and is unrepeatable. Divine adoption goes on all the time, through the Church, the Body of Christ, and particularly through the Sacraments, through Baptism, Penance, the Eucharist, and of course the Sacrament of Pentecost that we call Confirmation. And then Saint Paul writes something very striking: *the proof that we are God's children is that he "has sent forth into our hearts the Spirit of his Son, which cries out 'Abba!' ('Father!')*" (Gal. 4: 6). *Abba! Father!* This is our prayer every time we say the Our Father. But we have to say it in the Spirit, with a clear awareness that in Christ "we are no longer slaves but children, and therefore heirs with Christ to his kingdom" (Cf. *ibid.* 4: 7). This new condition of ours as Christians, that is, our transformation through grace and our sharing in divine life itself, will reach its fulfillment in eternity. Then we shall share the happiness with which God himself is happy, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Do you see how important it is to invoke the Holy Spirit and to allow him to work in us? We must remember that the Holy Spirit can do great things for us! And the Holy Spirit does great things for us every day.

5. La próxima etapa del pasaje del Espíritu Santo es el Misterio gozoso de la Visitación. Impulsada por el Espíritu Santo, que destierra su temor, y llena de amor a su prima Isabel, que había concebido un hijo en su vejez, María deja inmediatamente la seguridad de su propio hogar y acude a ayudar a Isabel. Imaginad la sorpresa de María al escuchar a su prima decir: *“De dónde a mí que la madre de mi Señor venga a mí? Porque, apenas llegó a mis oídos la voz de tu saludo, saltó de gozo el niño en mi seno”* (Lk. 1: 43-44). Ese niño era Juan el Bautista, el mayor de los Profetas, el que daría testimonio de Jesús al comienzo de su vida pública.

Entonces María pronunció las palabras del “Magnificat”, un hermoso himno de gratitud y alabanza: *“Engrandece mi alma al Señor y mi espíritu se alegra en Dios mi salvador”* (Ibid. 1: 46-47). A lo largo de los tiempos, la Iglesia repite todos los días el “Magnificat” en lo que llamamos la Liturgia de las Horas. Tal vez las palabras más importantes de ese admirable himno son: *“Ha hecho en mi favor maravillas el Poderoso, Santo es su nombre”* (Lk. 1: 49).

6. Like Mary, you must not be afraid to allow the Holy Spirit to help you become intimate friends of Christ. Like Mary, you must put aside any fear, in order to *take Christ to the world* in whatever you do – in marriage, as single people in the world, as students, as workers, as professional people. Christ wants to go to many places in the world, and to enter many hearts, *through you*. Just as Mary visited Elizabeth, so you too are called to “visit” the needs of the poor, the hungry, the homeless, those who are alone or ill; for example those suffering from AIDS. *You are called to stand up for life!* To respect and defend the mystery of life always and everywhere, including the lives of unborn babies, giving real help and encouragement to mothers in difficult situations. You are called to work and pray against abortion, against violence of all kinds, including the violence done against women’s and children’s dignity through pornography. Stand up for the life of the aged and the handicapped, against attempts to promote assisted-suicide and euthanasia! *Stand up for marriage and family life! Stand up for purity!* Resist the pressures and temptations of a world that too often tries to ignore a most fundamental truth: that every life is a gift from God our Creator, and that we must give an account to God of how we use it either for good or evil.

7. There is yet another stage of the Holy Spirit’s passage through history which we should meditate on: the third Joyful Mystery of the Rosary, the birth of the Son of God, announced by Angels to the Shepherds. *“You have nothing to fear... This day in David’s City a savior has been born to you... in a manger you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes”* (Ibid. 2: 10-12). Saint Luke tells us that the Shepherds said to one another: *“Let us go over and see this Child”* (Cf. ibid. 2: 15). And they went and found the Child with Mary and Joseph. *That is what we too must do!* We must go to this Child, this Man, the Son of God, at whatever inconvenience, at whatever risk to ourselves, because to know and love him will truly change our lives.

I remember a song I used to sing in Poland as a young man, a song which I still sing as Pope, which tells about the birth of the Savior. On Christmas night, in every church and chapel, this song would ring out, repeating in a musical way the story told in the Gospel. It says: “In the silence of

the night, a voice is heard: 'Get up, shepherds, God is born for you! Hurry to Bethlehem to meet the Lord' ". The same story is told in the beautiful hymn, "Silent Night", which everyone knows. That is a hymn which moves us deeply by reminding us that Jesus, the Son of God, was born of Mary, born to make us holy and to make us adopted sons and daughters of God. It is a hymn to the creative power of the Holy Spirit. It is a song to help us not to be afraid.

8. If I speak of Christmas, it is because in less than five years we shall reach the end of the Second Millennium, two thousand years since the birth of Christ on that first Christmas night in Bethlehem. We must allow the Holy Spirit to prepare us for this important event, which is another significant stage of his passage through history and of our pilgrimage of faith.

Your Archbishop, Cardinal O'Connor, has given me the welcome news that the Church in New York will begin to prepare for the Millennium by declaring 1996 a *Year of Evangelization*. What a wonderful beginning, to make a mighty year-long effort to transmit the teaching and the love of Christ to all who will listen, especially to those who, for some reason, may have wandered away or been alienated from the Church. Cardinal O'Connor will need all of you, and especially you young people, to help the Church enter the Third Millennium. You young people will live most of your lives in the next Millennium. You must help the Holy Spirit to shape its social, moral and spiritual character. You must transmit your joy in being adopted sons and daughters of God through the creative power of the Holy Spirit. Do this with the help of Mary, Mother of Jesus. Cling to her Rosary, and you will never wander far from her side.

The Pope is speaking to all of you. Not only to the young people. The Pope asks you to do this. He knows that you will do this, and for this he loves you. Then you can tell the whole world that you gave the Pope his Christmas present in October, in New York, in Central Park. *Do not be afraid!* The power of the Holy Spirit is with you!

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful!

Enkindle in them the fire of your love!

Amen.