



The Holy See

VISIT TO ST MARY OF THE ASSUMPTION PARISH IN ROME

HOMILY OF POPE JOHN PAUL II

Sunday, 17 May 1998

1. *“The Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (Jn 14:26).*

During the Last Supper, before undergoing the dramatic events of his passion and death on the Cross, Jesus promises the gift of the Spirit to the Apostles. The Holy Spirit will have the task of “teaching” and “bring to remembrance” his words to the community of the disciples. At the moment he is about to return to the Father, the incarnate Word foretells the coming of the Spirit, who will help the disciples to understand the Gospel thoroughly, to interiorize it in their lives and to make it living and active by their personal witness.

Since then, believers have continued to be guided by the Holy Spirit. Through his action, they understand the revealed truths with ever greater comprehension. This is what the Second Vatican Council stresses regarding the living tradition of the Church, which “with the help of the Holy Spirit ... is always advancing towards the plenitude of divine truth, until eventually the words of God are fulfilled in her” (Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, n. 8).

2. *“It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (Acts 15:28).*

From the very beginning, the apostolic community of Jerusalem feels responsible for faithfully preserving the patrimony of truth it has received from Jesus. It also realizes that it can rely on the help of the Holy Spirit, who guides its steps; for this reason it docilely calls on him in every circumstance. We also see him in today’s first reading from the Acts of the Apostles. After reflecting on the obligations to be laid on the pagans who were converted to Christianity, the Apostles wrote to the Greek communities: *“It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (Acts 15:28).*

Peter, James, Paul and the other Apostles are very aware of the task that the Lord has entrusted to them. They must continue his saving mission with generous docility to the Holy Spirit, so that the Gospel, the seed of a new humanity, may

be spread everywhere. This is an indispensable condition if God's kingdom is to advance on the paths of history.

3. Dear brothers and sisters of St Mary of the Assumption in Tufello, I am very pleased to be with you today and to become acquainted with your community and your neighbourhood. Thank you for your warm welcome. Your parish, situated on the city's outskirts, has many things in common with that of St Stephen Protomartyr in Tor Fiscale, which I visited last 26 April. Unfortunately, there are considerable concerns and social problems here, too.

I am thinking, for example, of the lack of meeting places, of the high rate of unemployment, of the presence of so many elderly people who need care and assistance, of the sad phenomenon of drugs, for which there are no local programmes of prevention or for the rehabilitation of the drug-dependant. In this context, the efforts you are making to meet these challenges with practical interventions motivated by generous dedication assume even greater value.

Today I have come among you to express to you my appreciation for all you are doing in communion with the whole diocesan community, and I encourage you to persevere in your social and pastoral commitments. I respectfully greet the Mayor and the authorities present.

I cordially greet the Cardinal Vicar, the Auxiliary Bishop of this area, and your young parish priest, Fr Rosario Matera, who in a few days' time will be celebrating the 10th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood: we can see and hear that he is young. I wish him a generous and fruitful ministry. My affectionate thoughts also go to the priests who collaborate in parish activities and to the former parish priest, Mons. Luigi Carletti, who guided your parish family for 21 years.

I greet the women religious of the Holy Family of the Sacred Heart, who offer their valuable service to the elderly in the retirement home they run, and the Sisters of the Angels, Adorers of the Blessed Trinity, who, in addition to working zealously in parish activities, conduct a kindergarten and a The Holy Father celebrates Mass at St Mary of the Assumption primary school. My greetings also go to all the members of the various parish groups, who I know are deeply committed to ensuring that the parish gives ever better expression to its identity as a "family of families", a gathering place for the whole neighbourhood, where increasing attention is paid to the needs of individuals and where the Gospel is proclaimed with courage, fostering the encounter with Christ the Lord.

4. Dear brothers and sisters, to achieve these apostolic goals, your community has rightly made the message of Christ the centre and fulcrum of its missionary activity to inspire and nourish faith; you have done the same with the liturgy, so that it may be celebrated joyfully, and with charity, in order to bear active witness to it.

I know that, thanks to the City Mission, at least 120 missionaries in your parish have gone from house to house and 300 listening centres have been organized, thus preparing for the pastoral visit to every family which the parish priest intends to make next year. I am delighted and I congratulate you on this flurry of spiritual programmes which has been encouraged by the City Mission! Continue your grass-roots efforts in the area with an authentic missionary spirit. Be an entirely missionary community, which gives rise, like leaven, to hope in the neighbourhood.

The time of grace offered by the City Mission guides your evangelizing activity wherever people live, study and work, in

places of joy and suffering, on holiday and in the course of daily events.

Do not be discouraged, if at times your forces seem to you to be limited or insufficient for the breadth of the mission. In today's Gospel, Jesus assures us that the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, sent from the Father in the name of Jesus, is always with us. He is the principal agent of the work of the new evangelization. He teaches everything to the disciples and therefore to all of us, and reminds us of all that Jesus said.

5. *"Its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb"* (Rv 21:22).

The vision of the heavenly city described in the Book of Revelation directs our gaze to the goal to which all humanity is striving: perfect communion with God.

Dear brothers and sisters, sustained by this hope and drawn by the radiance of the divine light, let us hasten our steps on our spiritual journey to the Lord. As the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 approaches, in this year dedicated in a particular way to the Holy Spirit, let us faithfully invoke his living presence and support.

May the Holy Spirit illumine us all, especially your parish community; may he prepare it to receive his seven holy gifts, courageous and fearless in joyfully proclaiming to everyone Jesus, who died and rose, the salvation of all who turn to him with trust.

May Mary, who in this month of May became a pilgrim in your parish homes through the visit of her revered image, protect you with her motherly help. May she make you disciples who are more and more conformed to her divine Son, and may she transform your parish into a community of brothers and sisters who are ready to witness to the Gospel with their lives.

Amen!

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