



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO THE ROMAN PARISH OF ST. EDITH STEIN

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Sunday, 20 May 2001

1. *"The Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and call to mind all that I have said"* (Jn 14: 26). It is the great promise made by Jesus during the Last Supper. While the hour of the Cross draws near, He assures the Apostles that they will not remain alone: the Holy Spirit will be with them, the Paraclete, who will sustain them in their great mission of bearing the announcement of the Gospel into the whole world.

In the original Greek language, the word Paraclete means someone who stands alongside, to protect and sustain the one assisted. Jesus returns to his Father, but continues his work of teaching and of directing his disciples by means of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In what does the mission of the promised Holy Spirit consist? As we heard a short while ago in the Gospel of St John, Jesus himself states: "He will teach you all things and call to mind all that I have said" (Jn 14: 26). Jesus already communicated all he intended to entrust to the Apostles: with him, the Word Incarnate, revelation is complete. The Spirit will make them "call to mind", meaning to understand fully and to put Jesus' teachings into practice. It is what is still happening today in the Church. As the Second Vatican Council affirmed, guided and supported by the light and power of the Holy Spirit, *"the Church in the course of the centuries tends unceasingly to the fullness of the divine truth, so the words of God reach their fulfilment in her"* (Dei verbum, n. 8).

2. Beloved brothers and sisters of the parish of St Edith Stein, I am happy to be with you on the Sixth Sunday of Easter time and to celebrate the Eucharist with you. I greet with affection the Cardinal Vicar, the Archbishop Vicegerent, your zealous parish priest, Fr Stephen Ranfi, his collaborators and all the faithful of this young parish. My particular thanks go to those who, in your name, have offered me words of welcome and good wishes for my 81st birthday which was just a few days ago. Eighty-one years is quite something. I trust that you will continue to pray for me so

that I can accomplish the ministry entrusted to me with a total submission to the designs of divine Providence.

My greeting full of kindness and affection goes to the children who will receive their first Holy Communion. To them I recommend to remain united with Jesus who today, in the Eucharistic Bread, enters into profound communion with their young lives. Children, trust Jesus! Love him and always keep his word so that, thanks to the gift of the Holy Spirit who transforms the bread and wine into his Body and Blood, He can always dwell in you and you can always remain in Him.

To you who listen and to all the children of Rome who receive their first communion this year in the parishes of Rome and throughout the world, I recommend that you often approach the sacrament of Confession, so that your meeting with Jesus in the Eucharist may take place with a heart that is pure and open to the action of divine grace. For your families and for the families of the parish, I ask to encourage a stable and deep relationship with Jesus by means of regular participation in catechism and Sunday Mass.

3. Dear brothers and sisters, your parish began its life within the Diocese on 11 October 1998, the day on which I had the joy of canonizing the daughter of Israel and Carmelite martyr, Edith Stein, Sr Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, whom you venerate as your special Patron.

From the great contemporary saint, your parish can learn much for the benefit of its faithfulness to its missionary vocation. I invite you to know and to appreciate, both individually and as a community, her life, her writings and her teaching. On this occasion I am pleased to recall the saying that Edith Stein wrote in 1933 when she met the Prioress of the Carmelite Monastery of Cologne in Germany, as she applied for entry, "Human activity can not help us, but only the Passion of Christ. It is my desire to share in it".

To share in the Passion of Christ is the secret for building a truly effective missionary parish. I congratulate you on the wonderful initiatives of prayer and formation that you have set in motion or that you plan, despite the shortage of space and meeting rooms that we hope will soon be remedied.

In particular, I refer to the moments of community prayer such as, for example, the way of the Cross through the streets of the community and in your homes and the rotation of the pilgrimage Virgin of Fatima. I was happy to learn about the *monthly letter to Christians* which is sent to all your families to help them prepare with an adequate catechesis for the principal feasts of the liturgical year. In this context, I desire to express my appreciation to those who are involved in the groups of family evangelization and to the adults and young people who take part in the choirs.

4. To foster participation in the Passion of Christ, and therefore to foster a fruitful work of announcing the Gospel in the neighborhood, I strongly encourage you to participate in the

Eucharistic adoration that takes place every Friday. To put Jesus in the Eucharist as the centre of your personal and community life, even with this devotion, means to put in him all your hopes for a more decisive and courageous spread of the Gospel. Be sure that the Eucharist produces in the Church wonderful and surprising fruit!

With you I entrust to the Lord even the *popular mission* which you have set for the coming month of October. It will be a mission directed above all to the young people and will be under the direction of the students of the Pontifical Roman Major Seminary, but will involve all the members of the community. I cordially wish that through the mission and prayers of all, young people can meet Christ in their hearts, let him speak to their lives and then decide to follow him. May the Lord grant that even from this parish and from the entire diocese, thanks to the prayers and commitment of many persons and families, many holy vocations may come forth for the priesthood, consecrated and missionary life, vocations which the Church needs today more than ever before.

5. "The angel showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down from heaven, from God, resplendent with the glory of God" (Apoc. 21: 10). The vision of the heavenly Jerusalem, described so vividly by the Apocalypse, holds before us the goal towards which the Church and the whole of humanity is tending. It is the goal of full and definitive communion with God. Catching sight of it believers bind themselves to live the Gospel and at the same time help to build up the earthly city according to the mind of God.

May the Virgin Mary, whom in the month of May we venerate and pray to with special devotion as our heavenly Mother, ever protect your parish and the whole diocese of Rome. May she, who was the first to receive into her virginal womb the divine Word, help us to be more conformed to her divine Son and ready to announce faithfully the word of the Gospel and to witness it with a coherent lifestyle. Amen.

After Mass was over, the Holy Father made these comments:

During the Eucharistic celebration the wind was certainly strong. The wind is a symbol of the Holy Spirit who breathes forth life. So there was a great wind when the Holy Spirit came down on the Apostles. I hope that today's wind may also be a symbol of the descent of the Holy Spirit on your young parish.