



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO A GROUP OF PILGRIMS FROM
THE ARCHDIOCESE OF NAPLES, ITALY**

24 March 1979

Beloved Brothers and Sisters of the Archdiocese of Naples!

Listening to the voice of your Christian heart and to the invitation of your revered Pastor, Cardinal Corrado Ursi, and of your priests, you have come to the Pope with a majestic pilgrimage which moves me. Welcome all of you, workers and faithful crowding this incomparable Basilica.

And welcome also, you students and young people who, in Paul VI Hall, are listening to my voice and whom I will have the pleasure of meeting shortly. As I speak, I feel you close to us here, even though the Vatican Basilica could not hold you all.

What shall I say to you, if not thank you for your kindness? What shall I express to you, if not praise for your faith?

Yes, beloved faithful of Naples! Religious faith and kindness of heart are magnificently united in your Christian traditions and in your way of living! And I address to you present here and to all your fellow citizens my most sincere and cordial greeting: to the religious and civil Authorities; to the men of study, of technique, of work; to the mothers of families; to the old; to the boys and girls appearing at the horizons and responsibilities of life; to the youngsters and children who bring joy to families with their joyful confidence; to the sick and suffering and to all those who, for any reason, have some sorrow in their heart! Let all receive the greeting of the Vicar of Christ!

Your Naples, so poetic with the stupendous spectacle of the sky and the sea full of light and blue, is a faithful city. It is a good city, and it is also a suffering city for so many reasons, not least because of the insidious and deadly disease which has snatched so many children from the love

of their dear ones. And I, as Pastor and Father, delighting in your faith and joining in your grief, intend to gather in my heart all your joys and all your concerns, saying with the Psalmist: "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!" (Ps 133,1).

In the early times of the Church, at Jerusalem, Antioch, and Rome, the Christians used to go to meet Peter to hear his word, to listen to his experiences, to bring back courage and spiritual fervour. In this way you, too, have come to hear from his Successor a word of love and life. And I, starting from the Lenten period, which we are going through, and from my first Encyclical Letter, will speak to you briefly of the presence of Christ the Redeemer in our daily life.

1.—*Jesus is first of all the support of our suffering.*

Suffering is a reality that is terribly real and sometimes even atrocious and heart-rending. Physical, moral, and spiritual pain torments poor mankind at all times. We must be grateful to science, technique, medicine, and social and civil organizations which try in all ways to eliminate or at least assuage suffering; but it always remains victorious and the defeat weighs on afflicted and helpless man. It almost seems, in fact, that to greater social progress there corresponds a moral decline, with the consequence of other sufferings, fears, and concerns.

Suffering is also a mysterious and overwhelming reality.

Well, we Christians, looking at the crucified Jesus, find the strength to accept this mystery. The Christian knows that, after original sin, human history is always a risk. But he also knows that God himself willed to enter our grief, feel our pangs, pass through the agony of the spirit and the torment of the body. Faith in Christ does not take away suffering, but illuminates it, raises it, purifies it, sublimates it and makes it efficacious for eternity.

In any pain of ours, moral or physical, let us look at the Crucified! Let the Crucified reign, clearly visible and venerated, in our houses. Only he can comfort and reassure us! Let us love the Crucified, as your great theologian and doctor of the Church, St Alphonsus Liguori, desired.

2.—*In the second place, Jesus is the foundation of our joy.*

Christian joy is a reality that is not easy to describe, because it is spiritual and also belongs to the mystery. He who really believes that Jesus is the Word Incarnate, the Redeemer of man, cannot but feel within himself a sense of immense joy, which is consolation, peace, abandonment, resignation, bliss. The Psalmist said: "O taste and see that the Lord is good!" (Ps 33, 9). And the French philosopher and scientist, Blaise Pascal, on the famous night of his conversion wrote in the Testament, "Joy! Joy! Tears of joy!". Do not extinguish this joy which springs from faith in Christ, the crucified and risen Christ! Bear witness to your joy! Educate to enjoyment of this joy!

— It is the joy of interior light on the meaning of life and history;

— It is the joy of God's presence in the soul, by means of "grace";

— It is the joy of God's forgiveness, by means of his priests, when one has, unfortunately, offended his infinite love, and, having repented, returns to his Father's arms;

— It is the joy of the expectation of eternal happiness, as a result of which life is understood as an "exodus", a pilgrimage, committed though we are in the affairs of the world.

To you, too as to the Apostles, Jesus says: "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full" (Jn 15:11). "No one will take your joy from you" (Jn 16:22).

3. —*Finally, Jesus is the guarantee of our hope.*

Man cannot live without hope; all men hope in some one and in something.

But there are, unfortunately, so many disappointments and, sometimes, even the abyss of despair appears. But we know that Jesus the Redeemer, who died crucified and rose again gloriously, is our hope! "Surrexit Christus spes mea!"

Jesus tells us that, in spite of the difficulties of life, it is worth while committing oneself with a tenacious and charitable will in the construction and improvement of the "earthly city", with one's spirit always straining towards the eternal one. The Christian makes every effort to realize the common good concretely; he overcomes his own selfishness with the sense of solidarity and in the commitment for the promotion of everything that serves for the dignity and integrity of the human person. The Church is a community of "servants" and every Christian must feel called to make his own city more and more beautiful, united, and just.

4.—Addressing you particularly, dear workers, who are gathered here fervently in such large numbers, I say to you: shed the light of charity and Christian hope on your work! What is work, in fact, but collaboration with God's power and love in order to maintain our life and make it more human and more in keeping with God's plan?

And so, take your serenity and your Christian confidence to your place of work! Raise your spirits and offer your labour to God.

The Pope is particularly close to you workers, he participates in your concerns and your problems, he loves you with sincere affection, and encourages all initiatives aimed at promoting your legitimate aspirations.

To you workers, Jesus stretches out his hand as friend, brother and Redeemer! May he always be

a light, support, and consolation for you.

With these wishes, we invoke the Blessed Virgin at this liturgical solemnity of the Annunciation. May Holy Mary, venerated at Pompei with such devotion by immense multitudes, be your Mother and your Queen and make you more and more convinced and consistent Christians!

Let my Apostolic Blessing, propitiating and comforting, reach you all

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