



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE EXHIBIT "WITNESSES OF THE SPIRIT"

Tuesday, 8 May 1979 Beloved in Christ, With understandable emotion, joined, however, with deep satisfaction, I have come here to inaugurate the Exhibition of Autograph Gifts made to Pope Paul VI on the occasion of his eightieth birthday, on 26 September 1977. He should have been present at today's ceremony, but the Lord called him to eternal glory on the feast of the Transfiguration last year. 1. My first thought goes, therefore, to the figure of my predecessor: a great Pope, listening continually and attentively to the multiple and differentiated voices of modern men: voices of faith, hope, love, dedication and solidarity; but also voices of grief, anguish, uncertainty, doubt, denial, hatred. Plunged in continual meditation of the Gospel, for so many years he made his voice heard, passionate, enlightening, guiding and at the same time exhorting, pointing out to the Church and to the world the way, sometimes a hard and difficult one, in the midst of the cultural, political and social changes of today. His pontificate was a real gift of God, and today, reverently, we bow to his memory, watchful and solicitous not to lose anything of his enlightened Magisterium and his noble example. 2. This sad memory is accompanied by satisfaction at this Exhibition, which represents a particularly significant homage to Paul VI. Just as he was offered on his eightieth birthday various works of art, which illustrated the rich personality of the apostle Paul, so he was given numerous and precious autographs, which are displayed today in this room, and will subsequently be kept definitively in the Vatican Apostolic Library. In the introduction of the elegant and copious catalogue of the Exhibition, we find the felicitous expression "Witnesses of the Spirit". This collection, in fact, contains Autographs of Saints, artists, poets, men of letters, musicians, philosophers, scholars, scientists, politicians and economists. Followers of different trends, of opposite ideologies, are represented. But above everything, in these handwritten sheets, traced out now with nervous rapidity, now with calm serenity, *man* is present: man who, at the moment when he puts pen to paper, intends to confer with himself, to analyse himself and get to know himself better; or else confer with others, to communicate and express to them his own conceptions and feelings; or to confer with God, to pray to him with quivering anguish or artless humility. Man is present in these manuscripts in the complete and complex variety of his life, his aspirations to truth, good, beauty, justice, and love. To this man, or rather to these men, whose testimonies are preserved with loving care so that they may be handed down completely to posterity, goes the respect of the Church. She is conscious that her fundamental function is "to direct man's gaze, to point the awareness and experience of the whole of humanity towards the mystery of God, to help all men to be familiar with the profundity of the Redemption taking place in Christ Jesus" (Enc. *Redemptor Hominis*, n. 10). My affectionate Apostolic Blessing to the donors, organizers and all those present. © Copyright 1979 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

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