



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC VISIT TO CANADA

**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO SICK AND ELDERLY PEOPLE**

*Martyrs' Shrine (Huronía)
Saturday, 15 September 1984*

Dear Friends,

1. I am happy to be with you this morning at the Martyrs' Shrine in Huronia. My pastoral visit to Canada would be incomplete without meeting the sick and elderly who are so close to my heart. When I think of you, I am reminded of the words, of the Lord spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "You are precious in my eyes, because you are honoured and I love you" (*Is.* 43, 4). Indeed you are precious in the eyes of the Lord and in the eyes of the Pope. You hold a place of honour in the Church for, in a particular way, you share in the mystery of the Cross of Christ, the Cross which in faith we know to be the Tree of Everlasting Life.

2. Suffering and sickness, and death itself, are part of the mystery of life. But while they remain a mystery, they need not be without meaning. In Christ and through his Passion and Resurrection, all creation has been redeemed, including all human experience. In fact, in his Passion Christ used suffering and death to express in the fullest way his obedient love for the Father. And now, in union with Christ our sufferings can become an act of love for the Father, a loving act of surrender to the providence of God.

3. People often tell me that they are offering their prayers and sacrifices for me and my intentions. I am deeply grateful for this gesture of solidarity and devotion, and I am humbled by the goodness and generous love of those who suffer. May you never doubt that the willing acceptance of your suffering in union with Christ is of great value for the Church. If the salvation of the world was accomplished by the suffering and death of Jesus, then we know that important contributions to

the mission of the Church are made by the sick and elderly, by persons confined to hospital beds, by invalids in wheelchairs, by those who fully share in the Cross of our saving Lord. As Saint Paul said of his own sufferings: "In my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions" (*Col.* 1, 24).

Saint Paul words are especially true of the Martyrs whom we honour at this Shrine. For these Martyrs gladly accepted suffering, and even death, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through the shedding of their blood, they bore witness to the power of God's grace shining through our human weakness. By their prayers and courageous example, we receive inspiration and strength for our lives.

4. Once when Jesus was addressing a large crowd, he said to them: "Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (*Matth.* 11, 28-29). These words are intended for all of us, but they have a particular significance for the sick and elderly, for whoever feels "overburdened". We note, with consolation, Jesus' promise that our souls will find rest - not our bodies but our souls. Jesus does not promise to remove all physical suffering from our lives during our earthly pilgrimage, but he does promise to refresh our spirits, to lift up our hearts, to give rest to our souls. Come to the Lord, then, with your weariness and pain, your burdens and sorrows, and "you will find rest for your souls". For Jesus is the Good Shepherd, the shepherd who leads his sheep to green pastures of consolation, to fresh waters of peace.

While I know that you pray for me, I also want you to know that I pray for you. I pray that you will have the spiritual strength to accept your difficult crosses and not to lose courage. Dear brothers and sisters: may the Lord Jesus make you strong in faith and hope and fill your hearts with peace and joy.

© Copyright 1984 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana