



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO JAMAICA, MEXICO AND DENVER (COLORADO)
ON THE OCCASION OF THE EIGHTH WORLD YOUTH DAY
(AUGUST 8-16, 1993)

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
DURING THE VIGIL OF PRAYER WITH THE YOUNG PEOPLE**

*Cherry Creek State Park, Denver
Saturday, 14 August 1993*

First Part

*Dear young people,
Young Pilgrims on the path of Life.*

"I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly" (Jn. 10: 10).

1. This evening these words of Christ are addressed to you, *young people gathered for the "World Youth Day"*.

Jesus speaks these words in the parable of the Good Shepherd. *The Good Shepherd*: what a beautiful image of God! It transmits something deep and personal about the way God cares for all that he has made. In the modern metropolis it is not likely that you will see a shepherd guarding his flock. But we can go back to the traditions of the Old Testament, in which the parable is deeply rooted, in order to *understand the loving care of the Shepherd for his sheep*.

The Psalm says: *"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want"* (Ps 23: 1). The Lord, the Shepherd, is God—Yahweh. The One who freed his people from oppression in the land of their exile. The One who revealed himself on Mount Sinai as the God of the Covenant: "If you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; *for all the earth is mine*"

(Ex 19: 5).

God is the Creator of all that exists. On the earth which he created he placed man and woman: "male and female he created them" (*Gen 1: 27*). "And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over... every living thing that moves upon the earth'" (*Ibid. 1: 28*).

2. The special place of human beings in all that God made lies in their being *given a share in God's own concern and providence for the whole of creation*. The Creator has entrusted the world to us, as a gift and as a responsibility. He who is *eternal Providence*, the One who guides the entire universe towards its final destiny, made us in his image and likeness, so that we too should become "*providence*" – a wise and intelligent providence, guiding human development and the development of the world along the path of harmony with the Creator's will, for the well-being of the human family and the fulfillment of each individual's transcendent calling.

3. Con todo, millones de hombres y mujeres viven sin darse cuenta de lo que hacen ni de lo que les sucede. Aquí, esta tarde, en el Cherry Creek State Park de Denver, representáis a la juventud del mundo, con todas las cuestiones que los jóvenes de fines del siglo XX necesitan y tienen derecho a plantearse.

Nuestro tema es la vida, y la vida está llena de misterio. La ciencia y la tecnología han hecho progresos enormes para descubrir los secretos de nuestra vida natural, pero un examen superficial de nuestra experiencia personal muestra que hay muchas otras dimensiones para nuestra existencia individual y colectiva en este planeta. Nuestro corazón inquieto busca más allá de nuestros límites, en alas de nuestra capacidad de pensar y amar: pensar y amar lo inconmensurable, lo infinito, la forma absoluta y suprema del Ser. Nuestra mirada interior se extiende hacia el horizonte ilimitado de nuestras esperanzas y aspiraciones. Y en medio de todas las contradicciones de la vida, buscamos *el significado verdadero de la vida*. Nos maravillamos y nos preguntamos, *por qué?*

Por qué estoy aquí? Por qué existo? Qué debo hacer?

Todos nos planteamos esas cuestiones. La humanidad en su totalidad siente la necesidad apremiante de dar un sentido y una finalidad a un mundo en el que aumenta la complejidad y la dificultad de ser feliz. Todos los obispos del mundo reunidos en el Concilio Vaticano II se expresaron de este modo: "...Ante la actual evolución del mundo, son cada día más numerosos los que se plantean o los que acometen con nueva penetración las cuestiones más fundamentales... Qué es el hombre? Cuál es el sentido del dolor, del mal, de la muerte, que, a pesar de tantos progresos hechos, subsisten todavía? ...Qué puede ofrecer el hombre a la sociedad? Qué puede esperar de ella? Qué hay después de esta vida temporal?" (*Gaudium et spes*, 10).

Dejar de plantearse esas cuestiones básicas significa renunciar a *la gran aventura de buscar la verdad acerca de la vida*.

4. You know how easy it is to avoid the fundamental questions. But *your presence here shows that you will not hide from reality and from responsibility!*

You care about the gift of life that God has given you. You have confidence in Christ when he says: " *I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly*" (*Jn. 10: 10*).

Our Vigil begins with *an act of trust in the words of the Good Shepherd*. In Jesus Christ, the Father expresses the whole truth concerning creation. We believe that in the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus the Father reveals all his love for humanity. That is why Christ *calls himself "the sheepgate"* (*Jn. 10: 7*). As the gate, he stands guard over the creatures entrusted to him. He leads them to the good pastures: "*I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be safe. He will go in and out, and find pasture*" (*Jn. 10: 9*).

Jesus Christ is truly the world's Shepherd. Our hearts must be open to his words. For this we have come to this World Meeting of Youth: from every State and Diocese in the United States, from all over the Americas, from every Continent: all represented here by the flags which your delegates have set up to show that no one here this evening is a stranger. We are all one in Christ. *The Lord has led us as he leads the flock*.

The Lord is our Shepherd; we shall not want.

In green pastures he makes us find rest.

Beside restful waters he leads us;

He refreshes our souls.

Even though we walk in a dark valley

we fear no evil; for he is at our side.

He gives us courage (Cf. *Ps 23*).

As we reflect together on the Life which Jesus gives, I ask you to have the courage to commit yourselves to the truth. Have the courage *to believe the Good News about Life* which Jesus teaches in the Gospel. Open your minds and hearts to the beauty of all that God has made and to his special, personal love for each one of you.

Young people of the world, *hear his voice!*

Hear his voice and follow him!

Only the Good Shepherd will lead you to the full truth about Life.

Second Part

1. At this point the young people gathered in Denver may ask: what is the Pope going to say about Life?

My words will be a profession of *the faith of Peter*, the first Pope. My message can be none other than what has been handed on from the beginning, because it is not mine but *the Good News of Jesus Christ himself*.

The New Testament presents Simon – whom Jesus called Peter, the Rock – as a vigorous, passionate disciple of Christ. But he also doubted and, at a decisive moment, he even denied that he was a follower of Jesus. Yet, despite these human weaknesses, Peter was the first disciple to make a full public profession of faith in the Master. One day Jesus asked: "Who do you say that I

am?" And Peter answered: "*You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God*" (Mt. 16: 16).

Beginning with Peter, the first apostolic witness, multitudes of witnesses, men and women, young and old, of every nation on earth, have proclaimed their faith in Jesus Christ, true God and true man, the Redeemer of man, the Lord of history, the Prince of Peace. Like Peter, they asked: "*To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life*" (Jn. 6: 68).

This evening we profess the same faith as Peter. We *believe that Jesus Christ has the words of Life*, and that he speaks those words to the Church, to all who open their minds and hearts to him with faith and trust.

2. "*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep*" (Jn. 10: 11). Our first reflection is inspired by these words of Jesus in the Gospel of Saint John.

The Good Shepherd lays down his life. *Death assails Life*.

At the level of our human experience, *death is the enemy of life*. It is an intruder who frustrates our natural desire to live. This is especially obvious in the case of untimely or violent death, and most of all in the case of the killing of the innocent.

It is not surprising then that among the Ten Commandments the Lord of Life, the God of the Covenant, should have said on Mount Sinai "*You shall not kill*" (Ex 20: 13; cf. Mt. 5: 21). .

The words "you shall not kill" were engraved *on the tablets of the Covenant* – on the stone tablets of the Law. But, even before that, this law was engraved *on, the human heart*, in the sanctuary of every individual's conscience. In the Bible, the first to experience the force of this law was Cain, who murdered his brother Abel. Immediately after his terrible crime, he felt the whole weight of having broken the commandment not to kill. Even though he tried to escape from the truth, saying: "*Am I my brother's keeper?*" (Gen 4: 9), the inner voice repeated over and over: "*You are a murderer*". The voice was his conscience, and it could not be silenced.

3. Avec le temps, les menaces contre la vie ne faiblissent pas. Elles prennent des dimensions énormes. Ce ne sont pas seulement des menaces venues de l'extérieur, des forces de la nature ou des " Caïn " qui assassinent des " Abel "; non, ce sont *des menaces programmées de manière scientifique et systématique*.

Le XXème siècle aura été une époque d'attaques massives contre la vie, une interminable série de guerres et un massacre permanent de vies humaines innocentes. Les faux prophètes et les faux maîtres ont connu le plus grand succès.

De la même manière, *de faux modèles de progrès ont conduit à mettre en danger l'équilibre écologique de la terre*. L'homme fait à l'image et à la ressemblance du Créateur – était appelé à être *le bon pasteur de l'environnement*, cadre de son existence et de sa vie. C'est la charge qu'il a reçue depuis longtemps et que la famille humaine a assumée non sans succès tout au long de son histoire, jusqu'à *une époque récente où l'homme est devenu lui-même le destructeur de son*

environnement naturel. Cela s'est déjà produit en certains lieux, ou c'est en train de se réaliser. Mais il y a davantage. Nous assistons aussi à la diffusion d'une *mentalité de lutte contre la vie* – une attitude d'hostilité à la vie dans le sein maternel et à la vie dans ses dernières étapes. C'est au moment où la science et la médecine réussissent à avoir une plus grande capacité de veiller sur la santé et sur la vie que, précisément, *les menaces contre la vie deviennent plus insidieuses*. *L'avortement* et *l'euthanasie* – meurtre réel d'un véritable être humain – sont revendiqués comme des " droits " et des solutions à des " problèmes ", des problèmes individuels ou des problèmes de société. Le *massacre des innocents* n'est pas un acte moins pécheur ou moins destructeur parce qu'il est accompli de manière légale et scientifique. Dans les métropoles modernes, la vie – premier don de Dieu et droit fondamental de chaque individu, base de tous les autres droits – est souvent traitée tout au plus comme *une marchandise* à organiser, à commercialiser et à manipuler à sa convenance.

Tutto questo avviene mentre *Cristo il Buon Pastore*, vuole che noi abbiamo la vita. *Egli conosce ciò che minaccia la vita*; sa riconoscere il lupo che arriva per rapire e disperdere le pecore. Egli sa individuare quanti tentano di entrare nel gregge, ma sono ladri e mercenari (cf. *Jn.* 10: 1. 13). Si accorge di quanti giovani dissipano la loro esistenza fuggendo nell'irresponsabilità e nella falsità. Droga, abuso di sostanze alcoliche, pornografia e disordine sessuale, violenza: ecco alcuni gravi problemi che richiedono una seria risposta dalla società intera, in ogni Paese e a livello internazionale. Ma essi sono anche tragedie personali da affrontare con atti concreti interpersonali di amore e di solidarietà, grazie ad un *grande rinnovamento della propria responsabilità personale* davanti a Dio, davanti agli altri e davanti alla nostra stessa coscienza. Siamo i custodi dei nostri fratelli! (cf. *Gen* 4: 9)

4. Why do the consciences of young people not rebel against this situation, especially against the moral evil which flows from personal choices? Why do so many acquiesce in attitudes and behavior which offend human dignity and disfigure the image of God in us? The normal thing would be for conscience to point out the mortal danger to the individual and to humanity contained in the easy acceptance of evil and sin.

And yet, it is not always so. Is it *because conscience itself is losing the ability to distinguish good from evil*?

In a technological culture in which people are used to dominating matter, discovering its laws and mechanisms in order to transform it according to their wishes, the danger arises of also wanting to manipulate conscience and its demands. In a culture which holds that no universally valid truths are possible, nothing is absolute. Therefore, in the end – they say – objective goodness and evil no longer really matter. Good comes to mean what is pleasing or useful at a particular moment.

Evil means what contradicts our subjective wishes. Each person can build a private system of values.

5. Young people, do not give in to this widespread false morality. Do not stifle your conscience! Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a person, where we are alone with God (Cf. *Gaudium et spes*, 16). "In the depths of his conscience man detects a law which he does not

impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience" (Cf. *Gaudium et spes*, 16). That law is not an external human law, but the voice of God, calling us to free ourselves from the grip of evil desires and sin, and stimulating us to seek what is good and true. Only by listening to the voice of God in your most intimate being, and by acting in accordance with its directions, will you reach the freedom you yearn for. As Jesus said, *only the truth will make you free* (Cf. *Jn.* 8: 32). And the truth is not the fruit of each individual's imagination. God gave you intelligence to know the truth, and your will to achieve what is morally good. He has given you the light of conscience to guide your moral decisions, to love good and avoid evil. Moral truth is objective, and a properly formed conscience can perceive it.

But if conscience itself has been corrupted, how can it be restored? If conscience – which is light – no longer enlightens, how can we overcome the moral darkness? Jesus says: "The eye is the body's lamp. If your eyes are good, your body will be filled with light; if your eyes are bad, your body will be in darkness. And if your light is darkness, how deep will the darkness be!" (*Mt.* 6: 22-23).

But Jesus also says: "*I am the light of the world. No follower of mine shall ever walk in darkness; no, he shall possess the light of life*" (*Jn.* 8: 12). If you follow Christ you will *restore conscience to its rightful place and proper role*, and you will be the light of the world, the salt of the earth (cf. *Mt.* 5: 13).

A re-birth of conscience must come from two sources: first, *the effort to know objective truth with certainty*, including the truth about God; and secondly, *the light of faith in Jesus Christ*, who alone has the words of Life.

6. Con el espléndido telón de fondo de las montañas del Colorado, con su aire puro que da paz y serenidad a la naturaleza, el alma se eleva espontáneamente para cantar la alabanza del Creador: "¡Oh Señor, Dios nuestro, qué glorioso tu nombre por toda la tierra!" (*Ps* 8: 2).

Jóvenes peregrinos: el mundo visible es como un mapa que señala el cielo, la morada eterna del Dios vivo. Aprendemos a ver al Creador contemplando la belleza de sus criaturas. En este mundo resplandecen la bondad, la sabiduría y el poder omnipotente de Dios. Y la inteligencia humana, incluso después del pecado original – con tal que no esté ofuscada por el error o la pasión – puede descubrir la mano del Artista en las obras maravillosas que ha hecho. La razón puede conocer a Dios por medio del libro de la naturaleza: un Dios personal, infinitamente bueno, sabio, poderoso y eterno, que trasciende el mundo y, al mismo tiempo, está presente en lo más íntimo de sus criaturas. San Pablo escribe: "Porque lo invisible de Dios, desde la creación del mundo, se deja ver a la inteligencia a través de sus obras: su poder eterno y su divinidad" (*Rom* 1: 20).

Jesús nos enseñó a ver la mano del Padre en la belleza de los lirios del campo, las aves del cielo, la noche estrellada, los campos maduros para la cosecha, los rostros de los niños y las necesidades del pobre y el humilde. Si observáis el universo con corazón puro, también vosotros veréis el rostro de Dios (Cf. *Mt.* 5: 8), porque revela el misterio del amor providencial del Padre.

Los jóvenes son especialmente sensibles a la belleza de la naturaleza y su contemplación les inspira espiritualmente. Pero tiene que ser una contemplación auténtica. Una contemplación que no revele el rostro de un Padre personal, inteligente, libre y amoroso, sino que llegue sólo a la

figura oscura de una divinidad impersonal o fuerza cósmica, no es suficiente. No *debemos confundir al Creador con su creación*.

La criatura no tiene vida por sí misma, sino por Dios. Al descubrir la grandeza de Dios, el hombre descubre la posición única que ocupa en el mundo visible: "Lo hiciste poco inferior a los ángeles, lo coronaste de gloria y dignidad; le diste el mando sobre las obras de tus manos, todo lo sometiste bajo sus pies" (*Ps* 8: 6-7). Sí, la contemplación de la naturaleza no sólo revela al Creador, sino también el papel del ser humano en el mundo que ha creado. Con fe, revela la grandeza de nuestra dignidad como seres creados a su imagen.

Para tener vida y tenerla en abundancia, para restablecer la armonía original de la creación, debemos respetar esa imagen divina en toda la creación y, de modo especial, en la misma vida humana.

7. When *the light of faith* penetrates this natural consciousness we reach a new certainty. The words of Christ ring out with utter truth: "*I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly*".

Against all the forces of death, in spite of all the false teachers, *Jesus Christ continues to offer humanity the only true and realistic hope*. He is the world's true Shepherd. This is because *he and the Father are one* (Cf. *Jn.* 17: 22). In his divinity he is one with the Father; in his humanity he is one with us.

Because he took upon himself our human condition, Jesus Christ is able to communicate to all those who are united with him in Baptism *the Life that he has in himself*. And because in the Trinity, *Life is Love*, the very love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (cf. *Rom* 5: 5). *Life and love are inseparable*: the love of God for us, and the love we give in return – love of God and love of every brother and sister. This will be the theme of the last part of our reflection later this evening.

Third Part

Dear young pilgrims,

1. The Spirit has led you to Denver *to fill you with new Life*: to give you a stronger faith and hope and love. Everything in you – your mind and heart, will and freedom, gifts and talents – everything is being taken up by the Holy Spirit in order to make you *"living stones" of the "spiritual house" which is the Church*. This Church is inseparable from Jesus; he loves her as the Bridegroom loves the Bride. This Church today, in the United States and in all the other countries from which you come, *needs the affection and cooperation of her young people, the hope of her future*. In the Church each one has a role to play, and all together we build up the one Body of Christ, the one People of God.

As the Third Millennium approaches, the Church knows that the Good Shepherd continues, as always, to be the sure hope of humanity. Jesus Christ never ceases to be the "sheepgate". And despite the history of humanity's sins against life, he never ceases to repeat with the same vigor

and love: " *I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly*" (*Jn. 10: 10*).

2. How is this possible? How can Christ give us Life if death forms part of our earthly existence? How is it possible if "*it is appointed that human beings die once, and after this the judgment*"? (*Hebr 9: 27*)

Jesus himself provides the answer – and the answer is a supreme declaration of Divine Love, a high – point of the Gospel revelation concerning God the Father's love for all of creation. The answer is already present in *the parable of the Good Shepherd*. Christ says: " *The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep*" (*Jn. 10: 11*).

Christ – the Good Shepherd – is present among us, among the peoples, nations, generations and races, as the One who "lays down his life for the sheep". What is this but the greatest love? It was the death of the Innocent One: "The Son of Man is departing, as Scripture says of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed" (*Mt. 26: 24*). *Christ on the Cross stands as a sign of contradiction to every crime against the commandment not to kill. He offered his own life in sacrifice for the salvation of the world. No one takes that human life from him, but he lays it down of his own accord. He has the power to lay it down and the power to take it up again* (Cfr. *Jn. 10: 18*). It was a true self-giving. It was a sublime act of freedom.

Yes, the Good Shepherd lays down his life. *But only to take it up again* (cf. *Jn. 10: 17*). And in the new life of the Resurrection, he has become – in the words of Saint Paul – "*a life-giving spirit*" (*1Cor 15: 45*), who can now bestow the gift of Life on all who believe in him.

Life laid down – Life taken up again – Life given. In him, we have that Life which he has in the unity of the Father and of the Holy Spirit. *If we believe in him. If we are one with him through love*, remembering that "whoever loves God must also love his brother" (*1Jn. 4: 21*).

3. *Buen Pastor*.

El Padre te ama porque das tu vida. *El Padre te ama como el Hijo crucificado*, porque vas a la muerte dando tu vida por nosotros. Y el Padre te ama, *cuando vences la muerte con tu resurrección*, revelando una vida indestructible. *Tú eres la vida y, por tanto, el camino y la verdad*, de nuestra vida (Cf. *Jn. 14: 6*).

Tú dijiste: "Yo soy el buen pastor; y conozco mis ovejas y las mías me conocen a mí, como me conoce el Padre y yo conozco a mi Padre" (*Jn. 10: 14-15*). Tú que conoces al Padre (Cf. *Jn. 10: 15*) – el único Padre común de todos – sabes *por qué* te ama el Padre (Cf. *Jn. 10: 17*). Te ama porque das tu vida *por cada uno*.

Cuando dices: "*Doy la vida por mis ovejas*", *no excluyes a nadie*. Viniste al mundo para abrazar a todos los hombres y reunir en uno a los hijos de toda la familia humana que estaban dispersos (Cf. *Jn. 11: 52*). Todavía hay muchos que no te conocen: "También tengo otras ovejas, que no son de este redil; también a éstas las tengo que conducir" (*Jn. 10: 16*).

4. *Good Shepherd*, teach the young people gathered here, teach the young people of the world,

the meaning of "*laying down*" their lives through *vocation and mission*. Just as you sent the Apostles to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth, so now *challenge the youth of the Church* to carry on the vast mission of making you known to all those who have not yet heard of you! Give these young people the courage and generosity of the great missionaries of the past so that, through the witness of their faith and their solidarity with every brother and sister in need, the world may discover *the Truth, the Goodness and the Beauty of the Life you alone can give*.

Teach the young people gathered in Denver to take your message of life and truth, of love and solidarity, to the heart of the modern metropolis – to the heart of all the problems which afflict the human family at the end of the twentieth century.

Teach these young people the proper use of their freedom. Teach them that the greatest freedom is the fullest giving of themselves. Teach them the meaning of the Gospel words: "*He who loses his life for my sake will find it*" (Mt. 10: 39).

5. *For all of this, Good Shepherd, we love you.*

The young people gathered in Denver love you because they love life, the gift of the Creator. *They love their human life* as the path through this created world. They love life as a task and a vocation.

And they love that *other Life which, through you, the Eternal Father has given us*: the Life of God in us, your greatest gift to us.

You are the Good Shepherd!

And there is none other.

You have come that we may have *Life* – and that we may have it abundantly. Life, not only on the human level, but *in the measure of the Son – the Son in whom the Father is eternally pleased*.

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you for having said: "*I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly*" (Jn. 10: 10). The young people of the Eighth "World Youth Day" thank you from their hearts.

Maranatha!

Here, from Cherry Creek State Park in Denver, from this gathering of young people from all over the world, we cry out:

Maranatha! "Come Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22: 20).