



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)

FAREWELL CEREMONY

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

International Airport of Denver
Sunday, 15 August 1993

Dear Mr. Vice-President,
Dear Friends,
Dear People of America,

1. As I take my leave of the United States, I express my gratitude to you, Mr. Vice-President who are here to say goodbye, and to President Clinton who kindly welcomed me on my arrival, for the courtesy I have received at every stage of this visit.

I wish to thank all those who in any way have cooperated in ensuring the success of this "*Eighth World Youth Day*", which has brought young pilgrims from almost every country in the world to the beautiful City of Denver, to reflect on the words of Jesus Christ: "*I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly*" (Jn. 10: 10).

2. I too came as a pilgrim, *a pilgrim of hope*. I have always known that for the Church and for civil society young people constitute the hope of our future. But over the years of my ministry, especially through the celebration of events such as this one, that hope has been confirmed and strengthened again and again. It has been the young people themselves who have taught me to

have ever new and ever greater confidence. It is not just that the young people of today are the adults of the future who will step into our shoes and carry on the human adventure. No, *the longing present in every heart for a full and free life that is worthy of the human person* is particularly strong in them. Certainly, false answers to this longing abound, and humanity is far from being a happy and harmonious family. But so many young people in all societies refuse to descend into selfishness and superficiality. They refuse to relinquish responsibility. *That refusal is a beacon of hope.*

For believers, commitment to the spiritual and moral renewal which society needs is a gift of the Spirit of the Lord who fills the whole earth, for it is the Spirit who offers man the light and the strength to measure up to his supreme destiny (Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 10). This has been particularly evident in the prayer – filled attitude of the young people gathered here. As a result, they go away more committed to the victory of *the culture of life* over *the culture of death*. The culture of life means respect for nature and protection of God's work of creation. In a special way it means respect for human life from the first moment of conception until its natural end. A genuine culture of life is all the more essential when – as I have written in the social Encyclical *Centesimus annus* – "human ingenuity seems to be directed more towards limiting, suppressing or destroying the sources of life – including recourse to abortion, which unfortunately is so widespread in the world – than towards defending and opening up the possibilities of life" (John Paul II *Centesimus annus*, 39).

A culture of life means service to the underprivileged, the poor and the oppressed, because justice and freedom are inseparable and exist only if they exist for everyone. The *culture of life* means thanking God every day for his gift of life, for our worth and dignity as human beings, and for the friendship and fellowship he offers us as we make our pilgrim way towards our eternal destiny.

3. Mr. Vice-President, I leave the United States with *gratitude to God in my heart*. Gratitude for what has happened here in the World Youth Day. Gratitude to the American people for being open and generous, and for the many ways in which they continue to assist needy people around the world. I pray that America will continue to believe in its own noble ideals, and I express the hope that the United States will be a wise and helpful partner in the multilateral efforts being made to resolve some of the more difficult questions facing the international community.

My gratitude becomes an ardent prayer for the people of this great country, for the fulfillment of America's destiny as one nation under God, with liberty and justice for all.

America, defend life so that you may live in peace and harmony.

God bless America!

God bless you all!

©Copyright - Libreria Editrice Vaticana