



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
JOHN PAUL II
TO PILGRIM GROUPS**

Friday, 18 August 2000

1. I welcome you with great joy, dear brothers and sisters, to this special meeting which takes place during the celebrations of the [15th World Youth Day](#). The atmosphere of faith and spirituality that we are breathing in these days offers pilgrims an opportunity to deepen their knowledge of Christ and to examine their own fidelity to him.

I cordially hope that this is also true for each one of you, who come from different nations and continents, as I greet you with warm cordiality.

2. I am pleased to welcome you, dear friends of the Coptic Catholic Patriarchate, during your Jubilee pilgrimage. I extend a very cordial greeting to Patriarch Stephanos II Ghattas and the Bishops present. It gives me a pleasant opportunity to recall my recent Jubilee journey in Egypt, and once again to thank all those who contributed to its success.

You have answered the call of the Church which invites each of the faithful to turn more to the Lord, to be converted and to give greater witness to brotherhood, solidarity and charity towards the poorest members of society. Indeed, in the biblical perspective, the Jubilee is at once a privileged opportunity to thank God, to praise him and to ask him for his strength in order to be authentic witnesses of the Gospel in words and deeds. In your country it is also important to develop links with all your compatriots, especially the faithful of the other Christian denominations, so that we can walk together towards full unity, as well as with believers of the different religions, in respect for persons and freedom of conscience.

As I entrust you to the motherly intercession of the Virgin Mary, I hope that during this Jubilee Year each of you and all the faithful of the Coptic Catholic Church will receive the graces you need. May

this ecclesial act also strengthen the Gospel witness of all the members of the Patriarchate through growth in liturgical and spiritual life, in fidelity to the beautiful inheritance received from your tradition, as well as through the development of pastoral and missionary life, especially among young people, so that they will know Christ and the Church's teaching. Thank you. I would like to send my fraternal greetings to Pope Shenouda.

3. I now address you, dear priests of the Serbian Orthodox Church who have come from the Eparchy of Sabac-Valjevo. I greet you affectionately, together with your Pastor, Bishop Lavrentije Trifunovic, and with Catholic Coadjutor Archbishop Stanislav Hocevar of Belgrade.

Through you I would like to extend my respectful and fraternal greeting to your Patriarch, His Beatitude Pavle. My thoughts turn at this moment to the whole Serbian nation, which has been so sorely tried in recent years. May your beloved people stay faithful to their Christian traditions, also thanks to your pastoral service. To this end, I invoke an abundance of God's blessings upon you and upon the community of the faithful with whom you live and work, serving the Gospel cause. May the Lord richly reward your apostolic efforts for the kingdom of God.

I ardently hope that your country, Serbia, will rapidly succeed in resolving the problems besetting it, so as to look confidently towards a future of peace and development, in a context of collaboration and mutual respect with neighbouring countries.

4. I am now pleased to greet you, dear young Cubans, accompanied by Cardinal Jaime Lucas Ortega y Alamino, Archbishop of Havana, and by Bishop Carlos J. Baladrón Valdés of Guantánamo-Baracoa, who have come to Rome representing many of your peers at the World Youth Day in this Jubilee Year. This is a privileged opportunity for evangelization, ecclesial communion and interior renewal, through personal encounter with Christ together with numerous young people from all over the world, pilgrims to the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul.

Today I would like to recall the words I addressed to you during my unforgettable journey to Cuba. Continue to fix your gaze on Christ. He wants to offer you his friendship once again; his eyes, filled with tenderness, continue to gaze upon Cuban youth, the living hope of the Church and of Cuba. "Do not be afraid to open your hearts to Christ". Do not close yourselves to his love. Be his witnesses to other young people, making concrete commitments to spread the civilization of love in all contexts: family, ecclesial communities and work.

Therefore I ask the Lord that in this Jubilee Year the Spirit will fill you with his gifts and blessings. At the same time, before returning to your places of origin, I repeat to you, so that you can make them your own, the words with which they welcomed me in Camagüey: "Blessed are the feet of the messenger who proclaims peace!".

5. Once again, I express my affection to each of you present here and, as I invoke the motherly

protection of Mary assumed into heaven, I very gladly impart my Apostolic Blessing to you, extending it to all your loved ones.

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