



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF UNIV 2001

Monday, 9 April 2001

Dear Young People,

1. Welcome! As in past years, you have returned to Rome to spend Holy Week together. Many of you perhaps are here in this marvellous city for the first time, but for your association this Roman gathering, which includes a visit to the Successor of Peter, has become something of a custom.

Thank you for this meeting and for your youthful enthusiasm. I affectionately greet you and your superiors. I greet and especially thank those who in your name expressed the sentiments you share. I hope that each of you will spend these holy days in an atmosphere of deep spirituality.

2. The theme of the congress that has brought you together is "*A Human Face for the Global World*". This is a topic that allows you to compare experiences and proposals on globalization, a phenomenon that will increasingly mark society in the future.

You grasp the positive aspects of this process, but without ignoring the dangers. It cannot be the economy that dictates the models and pace of development and, even if it is only right to provide for material needs, the values of the spirit must never be stifled. *The true must always prevail over the useful*, good over well-being, freedom over fashion, people over structures. On the other hand, *it is not enough to criticize*; we must go further: *we must be builders*. For Christians cannot limit themselves to analyzing the historical processes under way and maintain a passive attitude, as if they were beyond their capacities to intervene because guided by blind and impersonal forces. Believers are convinced that *every human event is under the provident hand of God*, who asks everyone to cooperate with him in guiding history to an end worthy of man.

3. In short, the fundamental issue involves a decisive question: *How do I live the Christian faith?*

For me, is it just a set of beliefs and devotions restricted to the private sphere, or is it also a force that demands to be translated into decisions affecting my relationship with others? How much a man and woman of faith can influence society!

Part of Christian realism is to understand that great social changes are the fruit of small courageous daily choices. You often ask yourselves: when will this world of ours be fully conformed to the Gospel message? The answer is simple: when you first think and always act according to Christ, at least a part of that world will, in you, be entrusted to him. Bl. Josemaria, from whose spirituality you draw your inspiration, wrote: "Among those around you, apostolic soul, you are the stone fallen into the lake. With your word and example produce a first ripple ... and it will produce another ... and then another, and another ... each time wider. Now do you understand the greatness of your mission?" (*The Way*, 831).

4. In today's society, which pursues the optimization of productive activity, we note a *process of standardization* that endangers personal freedoms and even national cultures. How should we react? The Church's social doctrine contains the principles for an answer that respects the role of individuals and groups. But to promote a global culture of those moral absolutes which are the rights of the person, it is necessary for each Christian to begin with himself by striving to reflect the image of Christ in all his thoughts and actions.

This is certainly not an easy programme. It is instead a demanding act of faith, because following Christ means taking a path that leads to self-denial in order to give oneself to God and to others.

5. In the Message for the recent World Youth Day, which we celebrated yesterday, Palm Sunday, I wrote that Christ "is the Messiah who did not fit into any mould, who came without fanfare and who cannot be 'understood' with the logic of success and power, the kind of logic often used by the world to verify its projects and actions". And I explained that following the Master in this way involves the courage of a total "yes" to his call: "*If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me*" (Lk 9: 23). These words express the radicalness of a choice that does not allow for hesitation or second thoughts. It is a hard demand: these words today still sound like scandal and folly (cf. 1 Cor 1: 22-25). And yet this is the demand that we must follow.

Dear young people, may the Lord grant you to grow in understanding the mission to which he calls you. As I wish you a Holy Easter, allow me to renew the invitation contained in the Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*: "Put out into the deep - *Duc in altum!*": Jesus' invitation to Peter (cf. Lk 5: 4) offers you the measure of the response that the Lord expects from you. A total response of complete abandonment into his hands.

Duc in altum, where the sea is deepest, where the mystery of God's love opens before you marvellous spaces that an entire life will not be enough to explore.

May you be accompanied by Our Lady, whom I ask to guide you on the demanding path of holiness. It is with holiness that the world is changed. I cordially bless you.

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