



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC VISIT TO TORONTO,
TO CIUDAD DE GUATEMALA AND TO CIUDAD DE MÉXICO

17th WORLD YOUTH DAY

PAPAL WELCOMING CEREMONY

ADDRESS BY THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II

Toronto, Exhibition Place, Thursday, July 25, 2002

Dear Young People!

1. What we have just heard is the *Magna Carta* of Christianity: *the Beatitudes*. We have seen once more, with the eyes of our heart, what happened at that time. A crowd of people is gathered around Jesus on the mountain: men and women, young people and elderly folk, the healthy and the infirm, who have come from Galilee, but also from Jerusalem, from Judea, from the cities of the Decapolis, from Tyre and Sidon. All of them anxiously awaiting a word, a gesture that will give them comfort and hope.

We too are gathered here, this evening, *to listen attentively to the Lord*. He looks at you with affection: you come from the different regions of Canada, of the United States, of Central and South America, of Europe, of Africa, of Asia, of Oceania. I have heard your festive voices, your cries, your songs, and I have felt the deep longing that beats within your hearts: *you want to be happy!*

Dear young people, many and enticing are the voices that call out to you from all sides: many of these voices speak to you of a joy that can be had with money, with success, with power. Mostly they propose a joy that comes with the superficial and fleeting pleasure of the senses.

2. Dear friends, the aged Pope, full of years but still young at heart, answers your youthful desire for happiness with words that are not his own. They are words that rang out two thousand years ago. Words that we have heard again tonight: "Blessed are they ..." The key word in Jesus' teaching is a proclamation of joy: "Blessed are they ..."

People are made for happiness. Rightly, then, you thirst for happiness. *Christ has the answer* to this desire of yours. But he asks you to trust him. *True joy is a victory*, something which cannot be obtained without *a long and difficult struggle*. Christ holds the secret of this victory.

You know *what came before*. It is told in the Book of Genesis: God created man and woman in a paradise, Eden, because he wanted them to be happy. Unfortunately, sin spoiled his initial plans. But God did not resign himself to this defeat. He sent his Son into the world in order to give back to us an even more beautiful idea of heaven. *God became man* — the Fathers of the Church tell us — *so that men and women could become God*. This is the decisive turning-point, brought about in human history by the Incarnation.

3. What struggle are we talking about? Christ himself gives us the answer. "Though he was in the form of God," Saint Paul has written, he "did not count equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant . . . he humbled himself and became obedient unto death" (*Phil 2:6-8*). It was a struggle unto death. Christ fought this battle not for himself but for us. *From his death, life has sprung forth*. The tomb at Calvary has become *the cradle of the new humanity* on its journey to true happiness.

The "Sermon on the Mount" *marks out the map of this journey*. The eight Beatitudes are the road signs that show the way. *It is an uphill path*, but he has walked it before us. He said one day: "He who follows me will not walk in darkness" (*Jn 8:12*). And at another time he added: "These things I have spoken to you, that *my joy may be in you*, and that your joy may be full" (*Jn 15:11*).

It is by walking with Christ that *we can achieve joy*, true joy! Precisely for this reason he again repeats the proclamation of joy to you today: "Blessed are they ..."

Now that we are about to welcome his glorious Cross, the Cross that has accompanied young people on the roadways of the world, let this consoling and demanding word echo in the silence of your hearts: "Blessed are they. . ."

(Procession with the Holy Year Cross)

4. Gathered around the Lord's Cross, we look to him: Jesus did not limit himself to *proclaiming* the Beatitudes, *he lived them!* Looking at his life anew, re-reading the Gospel, we marvel: the poorest of the poor, the most gentle among the meek, the person with the purest and most merciful heart is none other than Jesus. The Beatitudes are nothing more than the description of a face, *his face!*

At the same time, the Beatitudes *describe what a Christian should be*: they are the portrait of Jesus' disciple, the picture of those who have accepted the Kingdom of God and want their life to be in tune with the demands of the Gospel. To these Jesus speaks, calling them "blessed".

The joy promised by the Beatitudes is the very joy of Jesus himself: a joy sought and found in *obedience to the Father* and in *the gift of self to others*.

5. Young people of Canada, of America and of every part of the world! *By looking at Jesus* you will learn *what it means* to be poor in spirit, meek and merciful; what it means to seek justice, to be pure in heart, to be peacemakers.

With your gaze set firmly on him, you will discover the path of forgiveness and reconciliation in a world often laid waste by violence and terror. Last year we saw with dramatic clarity the tragic face of human malice. We saw what happens when hatred, sin and death take command.

But today Jesus' voice resounds in the midst of our gathering. His is a *voice of life, of hope, of forgiveness*; a voice of justice and of peace. Let us listen to this voice!

6. Dear friends, the Church today looks to you with confidence and expects you to be *the people of the Beatitudes*.

Blessed are you if, like Jesus, you are poor in spirit, good and merciful; if you really seek what is just and right; if you are pure of heart, peacemakers, lovers of the poor and their servants. *Blessed are you!*

Only Jesus is the true Master, only Jesus speaks the unchanging message that responds to the deepest longings of the human heart, because he alone knows "what is in each person" (cf. *Jn* 2:25). Today he calls you to be the *salt* and *light* of the world, to choose goodness, to live in justice, to become instruments of love and peace. His call has always demanded a choice between good and evil, between light and darkness, between life and death. He makes the same invitation today to you who are gathered here on the shores of Lake Ontario.

7. What call will *those on early morning watch* choose to follow? To believe in Jesus is to accept what he says, even when it runs contrary to what others are saying. It means rejecting the lure of sin, however attractive it may be, in order to set out on the difficult path of the Gospel virtues.

Young people listening to me, answer the Lord with strong and generous hearts! He is counting on you. Never forget: *Christ needs you to carry out his plan of salvation!* Christ needs your youth and your generous enthusiasm to make *his proclamation of joy resound in the new millennium*. Answer his call by placing your lives at his service in your brothers and sisters! Trust Christ, because he trusts you.

8. Lord Jesus Christ, proclaim once more
your Beatitudes in the presence of these young people,
gathered in Toronto for the World Youth Day.

Look upon them with love and listen to their young hearts,
ready to *put their future on the line for you*.

You have called them to be
the "salt of the earth and light of the world".

Continue to teach them the truth and beauty
of the vision that you proclaimed on the Mountain.

Make them *men and women of the Beatitudes!*
Let the light of your wisdom shine upon them,
so that in word and deed they may spread
in the world *the light and salt of the Gospel*.

Make their whole life a bright reflection of you,
who are the true light that came into this world
so that whoever believes in you will not die,
but will have eternal life (cf. *Jn 3:16*)!