



The Holy See

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

17th WORLD YOUTH DAY

PAPAL WELCOMING CEREMONY

OPENING GREETING
BY THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II

Toronto, Exhibition Place, Thursday, July 25, 2002

Dear Young Friends!

1. You have come to Toronto from every continent to celebrate World Youth Day. My joyful and heartfelt greetings go to you! I have been eagerly looking forward to this meeting, especially when day after day from all parts of the world I received in the Vatican good news about all the initiatives that have marked your journey here. And often, even without having met you, *I commended you one by one in my prayers to the Lord*. He has always known you, and he loves each one of you personally.

With fraternal affection I greet the Cardinals and Bishops who are here with you; in particular Bishop Jacques Berthelet, President of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of Canada, Cardinal Aloysius Ambrozic, Archbishop of this city, and Cardinal James Francis Stafford, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity. To all of you I say: may your contacts with your Pastors help you to discover and appreciate more and more the beauty of the Church, experienced as missionary communion.

2. Listening to *the long list of countries from which you come*, we have practically made a trip round the world. Behind each of you I have glimpsed *the faces of all your fellow young people*

whom I have met in the course of my apostolic travels, and whom in a way you represent here. I have imagined you on a journey, *walking in the shadow of the Jubilee Cross*, on this great youth pilgrimage which, moving from continent to continent, is eager to hold the whole world in a close embrace of faith and hope.

Today this pilgrimage makes a stop here, *on the shores of Lake Ontario*. We are reminded of *another lake, the Lake of Tiberias*, on the shores of which the Lord Jesus made a fascinating proposal to the first disciples, some of whom were probably *young like you* (cf. *Jn 1:35-42*).

3. The Pope has come from Rome to *listen again with you to Jesus' words*, which still today, as was the case for the disciples on that day long ago, can set the hearts of young people aflame and motivate their whole lives. I invite you then to make the various activities of this World Youth Day which is just beginning a *special time* when each of you, beloved young people, *listens attentively to the Lord*, with a willing and generous heart, in order to become the "salt of the earth and light of the world" (cf. *Mt 5:13-16*).

Dear young people of Spain and Latin America, I greet you with affection. Do not forget the path of happiness that Jesus proclaims in the Gospel. My affectionate greeting goes to you and the Bishops accompanying you.

I greet also the Portugese-speaking young people, and I wish all of you the happiness and well-being announced in the Beatitudes!

With joy and affection I greet the Italian youth accompanied by their Bishops.

And finally, I greet my fellow countrymen who have come to Toronto from Poland.