



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO BERN
ON THE OCCASION OF THE NATIONAL MEETING
OF THE YOUNG CATHOLICS OF SWITZERLAND

WELCOME CEREMONY

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II

Payerne Military Airport in Bern

Saturday, 5 June 2004

Mr President,

Venerable Brothers,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. For the third time, divine Providence has brought me to this noble Country of Switzerland, *a crossroads of languages and cultures*, to meet a people which preserves ancient traditions and is open to modern times.

I address my cordial and respectful greeting to the President of the Swiss Confederation and thank him for his words of welcome. I greet the other Authorities and I am grateful to them for their welcome as well as for all they have done to facilitate this time too my stay in Switzerland.

I offer a fraternal greeting to the President of the Bishops' Conference, the other Bishops present and through them, the Ecclesial Communities of every Canton in your Country. My respectful thoughts also go to the Christians of other Confessions and to all people of good will who work in this Country.

2. The purpose of my Apostolic Pilgrimage is to meet the young Catholics of Switzerland on the occasion of their national rally. I will meet them this evening in the Bern Arena and it will be a celebration for them and also for me.

It is the duty to proclaim Christ's Gospel that impels me on the paths of the world, to propose it anew to the men and women of the third millennium and particularly to the new generations. Christ is the Redeemer of humanity! Those who

believe in Christ and follow him become builders of the civilization of love and peace.

3. Dear inhabitants of Switzerland, may I knock in spirit at the heart of each one of you, entering your homes and the various places where you live and carry out your daily activities. I would like once again to present to you all the joyful Gospel proclamation of Christ our Saviour, offering to each one of you my best wishes that you will enjoy his peace.

With these sentiments, I implore the Lord to pour out his gifts in abundance upon the whole Country. God bless Switzerland!