



The Holy See

JOHN PAUL II

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Wednesday 6 December 2000

All are called to build God's kingdom

1. In this Great Jubilee year, the basic theme of our catecheses has been the glory of the Trinity as revealed to us in salvation history. We have reflected on the Eucharist, the greatest celebration of Christ under the humble signs of bread and wine. Now we want to devote several catecheses to what we must do to ensure that the glory of the Trinity shines forth more fully in the world.

Our reflection begins with Mark's Gospel, where we read: "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (*Mk* 1: 14-15). These are the first words Jesus spoke to the crowd: they contain the heart of his Gospel of hope and salvation, the proclamation of God's kingdom. From that moment on, as the Evangelists note, Jesus "went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people" (*Mt* 4: 23; cf. *Lk* 8: 1). The Apostles followed in his footsteps and with them Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, called to "preach the kingdom of God" among the nations even to the capital of the Roman Empire (cf. *Acts* 20: 25; 28: 23, 31).

2. The Gospel of the kingdom links Christ with the Sacred Scriptures that, using a royal image, celebrate God's lordship over the cosmos and history. Thus we read in the Psalter: "Say among the nations, "The Lord reigns! Yea, the world is established, it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples" (*Ps* 96: 10). The kingdom is thus God's effective but mysterious action in the universe and in the tangle of human events. He overcomes the resistance of evil with patience, not with arrogance and outcry.

For this reason Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds, but destined to become a leafy tree (cf. *Mt* 13: 31-32), or to the seed a man scatters on the ground: "he sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows, he knows not how" (*Mk* 4: 27). The kingdom is grace, God's love for the world, the source of our serenity and trust: "Fear not, little flock", Jesus says, "for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (*Lk* 12: 32). Fears, worries and nightmares fade away, because in the person of Christ the kingdom of God is in our midst (cf. *Lk* 17: 21).

3. But man is not a passive witness to God's entrance into history. Jesus asks us "to seek" actively "the kingdom of God and his righteousness" and to make this search our primary concern (*Mt* 6 & 33). To those who "supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately" (*Lk* 19: 11), he prescribed an active attitude instead of passive waiting, telling them the parable of the 10 pounds to be used productively (cf. *Lk* 19: 12-27). For his part, the Apostle Paul states that "the kingdom of God does not mean food and drink but righteousness" (*Rom* 14: 17) above all, and urges the faithful to put their members at the service of righteousness for sanctification (cf. *Rom* 6: 13, 19).

The human person is thus called to work with his hands, mind and heart for the coming of God's kingdom into the world. This is especially true of those who are called to the apostolate and are, as St Paul says, "fellow workers for the kingdom of God" (*Col* 4: 11), but it is also true of every human person.

4. Those who have chosen the way of the Gospel Beatitudes and live as "the poor in spirit", detached from material goods, in order to raise up the lowly of the earth from the dust of their humiliation, will enter the kingdom of God. "Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world", James asks in his Letter, "to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to those who love him?" (*Jas* 2: 5). Those who lovingly bear the sufferings of life will enter the kingdom: "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (*Acts* 14: 22; cf. *2 Thes* 1: 4-5), where God himself "will wipe away every tear ... and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore" (*Rv* 21: 4). The pure of heart who choose the way of righteousness, that is, conformity to the will of God, will enter the kingdom, as St Paul warns: "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, ... nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 *Cor* 6: 9-10; cf. 15: 50; *Eph* 5: 5).

5. All the just of the earth, including those who do not know Christ and his Church, who, under the influence of grace, seek God with a sincere heart (cf. *Lumen gentium*, n. 16), are thus called to build the kingdom of God by working with the Lord, who is its first and decisive builder. Therefore, we must entrust ourselves to his hands, to his Word, to his guidance, like inexperienced children who find security only in the Father: "Whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child", Jesus said, "shall not enter it" (*Lk* 18: 17).

With this thought we must make our own the petition: "Thy kingdom come!". A petition which has risen to heaven many times in human history like a great breath of hope: "May the peace of your kingdom come to us", Dante exclaimed in his paraphrase of the *Our Father* (*Purgatorio*, XI, 7). A petition which turns our gaze to Christ's return and nourishes the desire for the final coming of God's kingdom. This desire however does not distract the Church from her mission in this world, but commits her to it more strongly (cf. [CCC, n. 2818](#)), in waiting to be able to cross the threshold of the kingdom, whose seed and beginning is the Church (cf. [Lumen gentium](#), n. 5), when it comes to the world in its fullness. Then, Peter assures us in his Second Letter, "there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pt 1: 11).

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I extend a special greeting to the group of Jubilee pilgrims from Indonesia, led by Bishop Canisius Mandagi of Ambon. I welcome the various pilgrimage groups from the United States of America. Upon all of you and your families I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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