



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
TO THE YOUTH OF THE WORLD
ON THE OCCASION OF THE IV WORLD YOUTH DAY
(SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA, AUGUST 1989)**

"*I am the Way, the Truth and the Life*" (Jn 14:6) Dear young people! I am happy to be with you once again in order to announce the celebration of the IV World Youth Day. In my dialogue with you, this Day has, indeed, a privileged place. It affords me the welcome opportunity of speaking to the young people, not only of one country but of the whole world; of saying to each and every one of you that the Pope looks towards you with so much love and so much hope, that he listens to you with great attention and wishes to respond to your deepest aspirations. World Youth Day 1989 will be centred on Jesus Christ, as our Way, our Truth and our Life (cfr. Jn 14:6). For all of you it must therefore become the Day of a new, a more mature and a deeper discovery of Christ in your life. To be young is already in itself a special and specific treasure for every young man and young woman (cfr. *Letter to the Youth of the World*, n. 3). This treasure consists, among other things, in the fact that yours is an age of many important discoveries. Each one of you discovers himself or herself, his or her personality, the meaning for him or for her of existence, the reality of good and evil. You also discover the whole world around you - the human world and the world of nature. Now, among these many discoveries there must not be lacking one that is of fundamental importance for every human being: *the personal discovery of Jesus Christ*. Discovering Christ, always again and always more fully, is the most wonderful adventure of our life. That is why, on the occasion of the forthcoming Youth Day, I want to ask each one of you some very important questions, and to suggest the answers. - Have you already discovered Christ, who is the Way? Yes, Jesus is for us a way that leads to the Father - the only Way. Whoever wants to reach salvation must set out along this way. You young people very often find yourselves at a crossroads, not knowing which path to choose, which way to go; there are so many wrong paths, so many facile proposals, so many ambiguities. In moments like this, do not forget that Christ, with his Gospel, his example, his commandments, is always and alone the safest way, the way which leads to full and lasting happiness. - Have you already discovered Christ, who is the Truth? Truth is the deepest need of the human spirit. Young people especially are hungry for the Truth about God and man, about life and the world. In my first Encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* I wrote: "The man who wishes to understand himself thoroughly - and not just in accordance with immediate, partial, often superficial, and even illusory standards and measures of his being - must with his unrest, uncertainty and even his weakness and sinfulness, with his life and death, draw near to Christ" (n. 10). Christ is the Word of truth, uttered by God himself, in response to all the questioning of the human heart. He is the One who reveals fully to us the mystery of man and of the world. - Have you already discovered Christ, who is the Life? Each one of you is so anxious to live life in its fullness. You live with great hopes, with so many fine plans for the future. But do not forget that the true fullness of life is to be found

only in Christ, who died and rose again for us. Christ alone is able to fill in depth the space of the human heart. He alone gives the strength and joy living, in spite of any limit or external impediment. Yes, discovering Christ is the finest adventure of your life. But it is not enough to discover Him just once. Discovering Him becomes every time an invitation to seek Him always more, to come to know Him still better through prayer, participating in the sacraments, meditating on his Word, through catechesis and listening to the teachings of the Church. This is our most important task, as St Paul had well understood when he wrote: "For me, indeed, to live is Christ" (*Phil 1:21*).² The new discovery of Christ - when it is authentic - always directly results in *the desire to bring Him to others*, that is, in a commitment to the apostolate. This, precisely, is the second guideline for the next Youth Day. To the whole Church is addressed Christ's command: "Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation" (*Mk 16:15*). The whole Church, therefore, is missionary and evangelizing; she lives constantly in a state of mission (cfr. Decree *Ad Gentes*, n. 2). To be Christians means to be missionaries, to be apostles (cfr. Decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, n. 2). It is not enough to discover Christ - you must bring Him to others! The world of today is one great mission land, even in countries of long-standing Christian tradition. Everywhere today neopaganism and the process of secularization present *a great challenge to the message of the Gospel*. But, at the same time, there are new openings in our day for the proclamation of the Good News. We see, for example, a growing nostalgia for the sacred, for genuine values, for prayer. And so, today's world needs many apostles - especially apostles who are young and courageous. You young people have in a special way the task of witnessing today to the faith; the commitment to bring the Gospel of Christ - the Way, the Truth and the Life - into the third Christian Millennium, to build a new civilization - a civilization of love, of justice and of peace. Each new generation needs new apostles. This means a special mission for you. You young people are the first apostles and evangelizers of the world of youth, assailed today by so many challenges and so much that is threatening (cfr. Decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, n. 12). Above all, you can be evangelizers, and no one can take your place, where you study, and in your work and your free time. So many of those of your own age do not know Christ, or do not know Him well enough. So you cannot remain silent and indifferent! You must have the courage to speak about Christ, to bear witness to your faith through a life-style inspired by the Gospel. St Paul wrote: "*Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!*" (*1 Cor 9:16*). The harvest is great indeed for evangelization and so many workers are needed. Christ trusts you and counts on your collaboration. On the occasion of the forthcoming Youth Day, I invite you, therefore, to renew your apostolic commitment. Christ needs you! Respond to his call with courage and with the enthusiasm that belongs to your age.³ The famous Sanctuary Santiago de Compostela, Spain, will be a very important point of reference for the celebration of this Day 1989. As I have already told you, after the ordinary celebration of your feast - Palm Sunday - in the particular Churches, I give you rendez-vous at the Sanctuary; I will go there, a pilgrim like yourselves, for the 19th and 20th August 1989. I am sure you will not fail to respond to my invitation, as you did not fail for the unforgettable meeting in Buenos Aires, in 1987. The appointment at Santiago will in any case be a moment of participation for the whole of the Universal Church; a moment of spiritual communion even for those among you who will not be able to be physically present. At Santiago the young people will indeed represent the particular Churches of the whole world; you will all be heirs to the "Santiago Trail" with the urge to proclaim the Good News. Santiago de Compostela is a place that has played a very important role in the history of Christianity; and so, its spiritual message is in itself very eloquent. Throughout the centuries the place has been a "point of attraction and convergence for Europe and for the whole of Christendom... all Europe gathered around the 'memory' of James during the very centuries when it was building itself into a homogeneous and spiritually united continent" (cfr. "*European Act*" at Santiago de Compostela, 9 November 1982, in *Insegnamenti* V/3, 1982, pp. 1257-1258). At the tomb of St James we want to learn that our faith has historical foundations; it is not something vague and transient. In the world of today, marked by a serious relativism and great confusion in values, we must always remember that, as Christians, we

are truly built up on the stable foundations of the Apostles, with Christ himself as the cornerstone (cfr *Eph 2:20*). At the tomb of the Apostles, we also want to receive again Christ's mandate: "You shall be my witnesses... Right to the ends of the earth" (*Acts 1:8*). St James was the first to seal his witness of faith with his own blood. For all of us he is an example and an excellent teacher. Santiago de Compostela is not only a Sanctuary. It is also a route: a closely-woven network of pilgrimage roads. The "Santiago Trail" was for centuries a pathway to conversion and an extraordinary witness to faith. Along this way arose visible monuments to the pilgrims' faith: churches and hospices. Pilgrimage has a very deep spiritual significance; it can represent in itself an important form of catechesis. The Church - as the Second Vatican Council reminded us - is, indeed, a people of God on the march, "in search of a future and permanent city" (cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 9). In the world today there is a revival of the practice of going on pilgrimage, especially among the youth. Today, you are among those more inclined to experience a pilgrimage as a "way" to interior renewal, to a deepening of faith, a strengthening of the sense of communion and solidarity with your brothers and sisters and as a help in discovering your personal vocation. I feel sure that, thanks to your youthful enthusiasm, this year will see a new and rich development of the "Santiago Trail".⁴ The programme of this Day is very demanding. To gather its fruits you will therefore need a specific spiritual preparation, under the guidance of your Pastors, in your dioceses, parishes, associations and movements. This will be necessary both for Palm Sunday and for the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in August 1989. At the beginning of this preparatory phase, I address to each and every one of you the words of the Apostle Paul: "Walk in love...; walk as children of light" (*Eph 5:2, 8*). Enter upon this period of preparation with these dispositions. Be on your way, then I say to all of you, young pilgrims of the "Santiago Trail". During the pilgrimage days, try to recapture the spirit of the pilgrims of old, courageous witnesses to the Christian Faith. As you journey on, learn to discover Jesus, who is our Way, Truth and Life. Finally, I want to address a special word of encouragement to the young people of Spain. This time it will be for you to offer hospitality to your brothers and sisters from all over the world. It is my wish for you that this meeting at Santiago may leave deep traces in your life and may be for all of you a powerful leaven of spiritual renewal. Dear young people, this Message of mine ends with an embrace of peace which I want to extend to all of you, wherever you may be. I entrust the ongoing preparation and the celebration of the World Youth Day 1989 to the special protection of Mary, Queen of Apostles, and of St James who, throughout the centuries, has been venerated at the ancient Sanctuary of Compostela. May my Apostolic Blessing - as a sign of encouragement and good wishes - accompany you all along your route. *From the Vatican, 27 November 1988* **JOHN PAUL II**