



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE
GATHERED IN THE VATICAN BASILICA**

Wednesday, 14 February 1979

Dear Girls and Boys,

Today I see you in very large numbers and enthusiastic, as always. I greet you all together with deep affection. I know that you come from various schools and belong to different groups, but for me you are all equally dear. Always be assured that the Pope is particularly close to you and expects a great deal from you, from the joyful commitment of your Christian witness and the seriousness with which you are preparing to take a responsible part in the construction of a better future for the whole world.

You certainly know of the journey I made some days ago in Mexico, to meet the representatives of all the bishops of Latin America in Puebla. Well, I want to invite you, too, to turn your thoughts as young Christians to the work that those bishops have carried out there in these days on the subject of evangelization in the present and future of that continent.

To evangelize means proclaiming the Gospel, and the Gospel is summed up completely in the person of Jesus Christ: in what he said and did, even more, in what he signifies personally for us as radical liberation from every form of evil.

Dear young people! To you, as to the peoples of Latin America, I have only this message to address: take as the stimulus of your own lives that same Jesus Christ who, according to the Letter to the Hebrews, "is the same yesterday and today and for ever" (Heb 13:8).

It was this Jesus that the first missionaries proclaimed in America, when they landed there for the first time over four hundred years ago. It is this Jesus who still constitutes the *raison d'être* of

millions of men in those countries, who, in him, did not abandon, but ennobled, the old traditions of their ancestors. It is this Jesus who gives them strength in carrying out the concrete commitment for the building up of a more just and more human society. And it will still always be this Jesus, the Son of God and our Lord, who in the future will never abandon his Church spread all over the world, but by means of his Spirit will always endow her with capacities to make men discover more and more the beauty of being Christians.

For this reason it is necessary that all of us should strengthen more the ties of our ecclesial community. All together we must feel ourselves more "Church" and "People of God". My dear brothers in the Episcopate of the Latin-American continent are giving this testimony of unity: "it is love of Christ that drives them" (cf. 2 Cor 5:14) to commit themselves for the Gospel on behalf of their peoples. In this they are effectively assisted by the more mature members of those Churches, that is by a large number of priests, religious and laity who are spending their lives to form a People of God based on justice, truth and love. But we must pray that the Lord may call forth more and more numerous and qualified vocations for the evangelical advancement of those beloved communities.

Dear boys and girls, sooner or later you, too, will have to think of how to be able to make yourselves useful to improve human society and the world in which we live. Then you will think also of what may best serve this purpose. Well, remember that only with the Gospel of Jesus Christ will you be able to set man really free from all slavery and give him the deepest happiness. The Gospel, in fact, places at the centre love and not hate, the equality of all and not oppression by a few, dialogue in peace and not a clash in struggle, the human person and not an abstract ideology, the advancement of life in all its manifestations and never its mortification.

This is what, with the help of God and with the protection of Our Lady of Guadalupe, real Christians are doing in Latin America in union and in harmony with their bishops.

And this is also what I warmly wish for you, while I give my fatherly blessing to you all, together with your dear ones.

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