



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO JAMAICA,
MEXICO AND DENVER (COLORADO)

EUCCHARISTIC CONCELEBRATION

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

*National Stadium of Kingston (Jamaica)
Tuesday, 10 August 1993*

"*Jesus is Lord!*" (Rom. 10: 9). He is "rich in mercy toward all who call upon him" (*Ibid.* 10: 12).

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

1. The Liturgy today repeats these words of Saint Paul, the Apostle of the Nations. Jesus is the Lord! He is our Redeemer, *the Saviour of all peoples*. "There is no other name in the whole world by which we are to be saved" (Cf. Acts 4: 12).

This *Good News of salvation* comes to us from God himself. "He has made his salvation known; in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice... All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation by our God" (Ps. 98 (97), 2:3).

The message of salvation is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son who is one with the Father. After the Resurrection, Christ sent forth his Apostles to proclaim this Gospel to all creation. Through the preaching of the Church, all peoples are called to accept the message of salvation, to become Christ's disciples and to be baptized in his name (Cf. Mk. 16, 15: 16).

2. In the fullness of time, the Gospel of Jesus Christ also came *to Jamaica!* The seed of God's word was planted on this Island through the preaching of the missionaries who five hundred years ago first taught the name of the Saviour to the Arawak inhabitants. Although the progress of God's

word has at times been held back by sin and human failures, it has been an unfailing source of light and hope to generations of Jamaicans. Today the truth of the Gospel continues to provide a *sure foundation for the growth and renewal of Jamaican society*.

As Jamaica prepares to celebrate the Quincentenary of the arrival of Columbus and the first evangelization, the Successor of Peter has been given the grace of coming to confirm you in your faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God (Cf. Lk. 22: 32; Mt. 16:16). Together let us give thanks to God for the many blessings he has bestowed upon Jamaica and its people.

I greet all of you with affection in the Lord. My fraternal greetings go first to *Archbishop Carter*, to *Bishop Clarke* and to *Bishop Boyle*, together with the clergy, Religious and laity of the *Archdiocese of Kingston*, the *Diocese of Montego Bay* and the *Vicariate Apostolic of Mandeville*.

My respectful greetings also go to *the Governor-General*, to the *Minister for External Affairs* representing the government and civil authorities who are present. I also welcome the Right Honourable Edward Seaga, Leader of the Opposition, and the representatives of the various Churches and Christian communities of the Island.

3. In the Old Testament, Israel's hope for salvation was symbolized by the *mountain of the Lord's Temple* in Jerusalem. In the First Reading, the Prophet Isaiah invites Israel to draw near to God's Temple and to live in holiness: "Come, let us climb the Lord's mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may instruct us in his ways, and we may walk in his paths" (Is. 2: 3).

Today the way to salvation leads no longer to the mountain of the Temple but to *Jesus Christ himself*, to the Son of God, the Word made flesh who dwells among us (Cf. Jn. 1: 14). Jesus said: "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" (*Ibid.* 2: 19). Saint John tells us that he was speaking of himself: "he was talking about the temple of his body" (*Ibid.* 2: 21). *Jesus' own Body*, risen from the dead and filled with the Spirit of Life, *has become a Living Temple*.

Saint Paul reminds us that our bodies too, as well as our souls, are meant to give glory to God; that we are called to *walk according to the Spirit*, and not to yield to the cravings of the flesh (Gf. Gal. 5: 16). "You must know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is within... You are not your own... So you must glorify God in your body" (1Cor. 6, 19). When we were baptized into Christ, we were given a share in his divine life; our bodies became temples of God's presence, dwelling-places of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who fulfils in our hearts the prophecy of Isaiah: he instructs us in God's ways, that we may walk in his paths (Cf. Is. 2: 3).

4. We have heard Saint Paul assure us: "if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10: 9). But the faith which brings salvation *must be seen in every aspect of our lives*, in the way we think, in the way we act, in the way we treat others.

Jesus puts this question to each of his followers: "*Do you believe...?*" (Jn. 9: 35). Echoing the Lord's words here tonight in Kingston, I appeal to you, Christians of Jamaica: "*Do not be afraid! Open wide the doors to Christ!*" Be confident that your faith in the Good News has the power to transform your lives and to purify and ennoble the life of your society.

Jamaica needs to hear the truth of the Gospel! Since the Gospel reveals the full truth about man and his noble calling, it gives the vision and strength needed to meet the many challenges which your society is facing. The Gospel has the power to inspire in every heart an unselfish commitment to the common good and the rejection of everything that stands in the way of building a renewed society, a society of justice, peace and solidarity.

Now is the time for the Island's Christians to strive to ensure that the principles which guide political, social and economic life are in conformity with God's law and with the Gospel. Now is the time to work together to overcome the effects of injustice and exploitation, to counteract the lack of concern for the needs of the poor and the disadvantaged, the lack of respect for the dignity and value of each person, especially women and children. Now is the time for Christians to reject the temptation to lethargy and hopelessness, to reliance on the excuses of the past, and easy recourse to useless quarrels. Now is the time for everyone to build together, inspired by the Gospel, one people, a united society, a better future.

5. Jesus Christ says to all men and women: "Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you" (Mt. 11:28). But Christ does not invite us to come to him for some empty consolation. He renews us and strengthens us to *go forth to share with others the salvation he has brought*. He tells his Apostles: "*Go into the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation*" (Mk. 16: 15). Christ – the one sent by *the Father* – *now sends others forth*: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (Jn. 20: 21).

These words remind us that the work of evangelization is at the heart of the Church's mission in the world. The Church began through evangelization—and she is ceaselessly renewed through evangelization. In every time and place the preaching of the Gospel must be the Church's first duty, her central priority. It must be the duty of every Bishop and priest, of every Religious, of every lay man and woman. Today, in Jamaica as elsewhere, there is urgent need for a "new evangelization", a new proclamation of Jesus Christ amid the challenges of our times. And every believer, every member of the Church, is called to share in this great task.

In a particular way, the new evangelization is entrusted to the laity, for it is especially through them that the Church of Christ becomes present in the various sectors of society as a sign and source of hope and of love (Cf. John Paul II *Christifideles Laici*, 7). I encourage you all *to share the light and joy of your faith with others*. Your witness to the Good News will be a leaven of renewal in the life of the Church on this Island. For "faith is strengthened when it is given to others" (John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 2).

6. In this regard I wish to say a special word to *Christian married couples*. In God's plan for the human race, "a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body" (Gen. 2: 24; Cf. Mt. 19: 5). The family, born of the faithful love of man and woman, is the basic unit of society, a cradle of life and love where God's gift of new life is welcomed, nurtured and allowed to develop. The future of society is essentially linked to the strength of its families (Cf. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 86).

Christian married couples! *The witness of your lives must be ever more clear!* Your faithful love must shine forth and stand in contrast to ways of living that are not in accord with the Gospel. Your families must be sanctuaries of love in the midst of the many difficult situations caused by the misuse of God's gift of sexuality.

As a people, Jamaicans have known the evils of slavery, a system which stripped human beings of their dignity as images of God, denied people's spiritual worth and reduced them to mere objects to be used and exploited. But apart from its exploitation of individuals, one of the greatest evils of slavery was its destruction of family bonds. Slavery stole men away from their wives; wives were left alone with the burden of raising children; and children were deprived of the presence of their fathers. The tragic fruits of this evil system are still present in attitudes of sexual irresponsibility. They are painfully obvious in the lives of too many children who miss the love and support of their parents and a healthy home life, and in too many women who struggle, often singlehandedly, to provide for their children.

Complete liberation from the past of slavery must also involve efforts to heal the deep scars left in the life of society. And in healing and rebuilding family life, Christian married couples have a fundamental witness to offer. As teachers of faith and virtue to their children, Christian parents point the way which the next generation will take. And by their lives of faith, fidelity, openness to life, and reconciling love, Christian families will be the primary evangelizers of other families.

7. Saint Paul writes: "Faith comes from hearing, and what is heard is *the word of Christ*" (Rom. 10: 17). Salvation comes from hearing God's word and responding in faith: "Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved" (Ibid. 10: 13). But the Apostle goes on to ask: "How shall they call on him... unless they have heard of him? And how can they hear unless there is someone to preach? And how can men preach *unless they are sent?*" (Ibid. 10: 14-15).

The same questions which Saint Paul asked in the Letter to the Romans must be asked again *today*. Who will bring the Good News? How can there be evangelization without evangelizers?

Jamaica has received the Gospel. She has heard the preaching of those who first brought the Good News to this Island so long ago. They came in response to Christ's call; they came in obedience to his command: "Go into the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation" (Mk. 16: 15).

And in fact, those preachers were heard: "*their voice has sounded over the whole earth, and their words to the limits of the world*" (Rom. 10: 18).

But it is also true that the *Good News needs to be proclaimed over and over again*: to every generation, to every people, to all the corners of the earth and to all the Islands!

On this beautiful Island of Jamaica, may God raise up worthy preachers of his word. May he raise up convincing witnesses to the power of his salvation!

May Mary, whom Jamaica honours under the title "Queen Assumed into Heaven", intercede for the peoples of the Caribbean, so that more and more they will be faithful listeners to the word, and ardently proclaim their faith in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Jesus is Lord! Amen.