



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO PARIS, ON THE OCCASION OF THE
12th WORLD YOUTH DAY
(AUGUST 21-24, 1997)

WAY OF THE CROSS

MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II

Friday, 22 August 1997

*To the Most Reverend James Francis Stafford
President of the Pontifical Council
for the Laity
for the Young People of the
Twelfth World Youth Day,*

1. "Master, where do you live?". This evening, my dear young people, you have come to follow Christ as he advances on the way to his Passion. Lift your eyes to the face of the One who comes towards you and calls you. Whom do you seek in this Jesus, marked by sorrow, "his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance"(Is 52:14)? He is the Servant of God, the Son of the Most High who, carrying our pain, has made himself the servant of us all. Look upon him, listen to him in his pain and trial! It is in him, who experienced human weakness in everything except sin, that you will find healing for your hearts.

Through the weakness of a humiliated and despised man, God manifested his omnipotence. Jesus, the Innocent One, by freely accepting to go to the extreme of obedience to his Father who had sent him, became the witness of God's boundless love for all humanity. The mystery of our

salvation is accomplished in the silence of Good Friday when a man, abandoned by all, bearing the weight of our sufferings, was delivered up to death on a Cross, his arms wide open in the gesture of embracing every man and woman. Could greater love be shown? A mystery that is difficult to grasp, a mystery of infinite love! A mystery that inaugurates the new and transfigured world of the Kingdom. On this cross, death has been overcome; from the death of the Son of God made man, life has sprung. His fidelity to the Father's divine plan of love has not been in vain, it has led to the resurrection.

2. The suffering Christ still dwells among the men and women of today. In order to reveal his power, God has come to share our deepest misery. In every person who is afflicted, beaten, mistreated, rejected, we can discover the Lord who travels the paths of humanity bearing his cross. Dear friends, the Crucified One is ever with you, by the side of those who toil, who suffer, who die. All of you who toil and labour under your burden, come to where Christ dwells, carry your cross with him, present him the offering of your lives, and he will give you rest (cf. Mt 11:28). At your side, the loving presence of Mary, Mother of Jesus and your mother, will guide you and give you courage and comfort.

In a world in which evil appears to triumph, where hope sometimes seems extinguished, be close to one another as Christ has made himself close to you, in union with the martyrs of the faith, of brotherhood and of concern for others, with the witnesses to justice and freedom, with the victims of intolerance and discrimination, with all those who in so many nations torn apart by hatred or war have given their lives for their brothers and sisters. Do not look away; have the courage to reach out, to make a fraternal gesture, after the example of Simon of Cyrene who helped Jesus on his way to Calvary. Be daring artisans of reconciliation and of peace. Live together in solidarity and brotherly love. Make the Cross of the Saviour shine so as to announce to the world the victory of the Risen One, the victory of life over death!

3. Dear friends, contemplating the Cross of Christ, listening in silence to the word which he addresses to you, discover this God who counts on man, who confides in you and never despairs of anyone. He offers you his strength in order to make fruitful the seeds of peace and reconciliation which are in everyone's heart. The most humble acts of charity and fraternity witness to the presence of God. This evening, gathered together as members of the Church, Jesus again invites you to be open to his loving gaze upon you, to receive the forgiveness which will give you the courage to start out again on the road of life. He calls you to enter his light in order to begin a time of conversion and reconciliation. The sacrament of penance that you are being offered for you to receive is the sacrament of a love accepted and shared in the joy of a reconciled heart and of rediscovered brotherhood. Dear friends, accept this love which transforms your lives and opens to you the horizons of truth and freedom.

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