



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS

POPE JOHN PAUL II

FOR THE XXX WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Beloved Brothers in the Episcopate,

Dear Brothers and Sisters throughout the world!

1. Christ is the Good Shepherd; "he calls his sheep by name and leads them forth" (Jn 10:3-4). We, his flock, know his voice and we share his concern to gather his people together, to lead them on the way of salvation.

In this 30th World Day of Prayer for Vocations, we want to ask the Lord unceasingly to send "the workers of the Gospel" to his Church. We want our prayer to be persevering, rich in hope, and full of love for our brothers and sisters, who are often confused as sheep without a shepherd.

2. I desire, first of all, to call attention to the urgency of cultivating what we could call, "basic vocational attitudes", which give life to an authentic "culture of vocation". These attitudes are: formation of conscience; a sensitivity to spiritual and moral values; the promotion and defence of the ideals of human brotherhood, of the sacredness of life, of social solidarity, and of civil order. It is a question of *a culture which allows modern man to refind himself, appropriating anew the higher values of love, friendship, prayer, and contemplation*. The world, tormented by what are often rending transformations, has need, more than ever before, of the witness of men and women of good will and especially of lives consecrated to the highest and most sacred spiritual values, so that there will not be lacking to our times the light which is given off by the most sublime triumphs of the spirit.

There is widespread today a culture which leads young people to be satisfied with modest endeavours which are far below their potential. But we all know that really in their hearts there is a restlessness and a lack of satisfaction in the face of ephemeral achievements; there is in them a desire to grow in truth, in authenticity, and in goodness; they await a voice which calls them by

name. This restlessness, besides, is precisely the sign of the inalienable necessity of a culture of the spirit. The pastoral care of vocations today has developed with a recognition of this historic and cultural dimension, which makes evident not only the crisis but also the awakening of vocations. It is necessary, therefore, to promote a culture of vocation which will recognize and welcome this profound human aspiration, which brings a person to discover that Christ alone can tell him the truth about life. He who "penetrated in a unique and unrepeatable way into the mystery of man" (*Redemptor hominis*, n. 8) "fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling" (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 22): *life is a totally gratuitous gift and there is no other way to live which is worthy of man than that of the giving of oneself*. Christ, the Good Shepherd, calls every person to recognize himself in this truth. Vocation is born from love and leads to love, because, "man cannot live without love" (*Redemptor hominis*, n. 10). This culture of vocation is at the base of a culture of new life, which is a life of gratitude and of gratuity, of trust and of responsibility; at its roots, it is a culture of the desire for God, who gives the grace of esteeming man for himself, and of incessantly defending his dignity in the face of all that could oppress him in body and in spirit.

3. If Christ "speaks to people as Man" (*Redemptor hominis*, n. 7), adapting himself to human categories, the Church also must speak a language which is simple and close to the sensitivities of young people, making an intelligent use of all modern means of social communication, so that what she has to say will be ever more incisive and better understood. Above all it will be necessary that the pastoral care of young people be explicitly vocational, and that it aims at awakening in youths the consciousness of the divine "call", so that they experience and taste the beauty of giving themselves in a stable programme of life. Each Christian, then, will truly give proof of his collaboration in the promotion of a culture for vocations, if he is able to commit his own mind and heart in discerning what is good for man: if he is able, that is, to discern with a critical spirit the ambiguities of progress, the pseudo-values, the snares of the deceptions which certain civilizations make shine before our eyes, the temptations of materialism and of passing ideologies.

4. I turn to you especially, dear young people! Let yourselves be summoned by the love of Christ; recognize his voice which rings in the temple of your heart. Receive his luminous and penetrating glance which opens the paths of your life upon the horizons of the mission of the Church, today more than ever committed to teaching man his true being, his end, his destiny and to revealing to faithful souls the unspeakable riches of the love of Christ. Have no fear of the fact that the response he requires is radical, because Jesus, who has first loved you, is ready to give what he asks of you. If he asks much it is because he knows that you can give much. Young people, give the Church a hand in the task of saving the world of youth. React against the culture of death by means of the culture of life.

I ask you, *Bishops of the Church of God*, to reinvigorate the social fabric of the Christian community by means of the evangelization of the family; assist the laity to enliven the values of consistency, justice, and Christian charity in the world of youth.

I turn as well to all who are called, in various ways, to define and to deepen the culture of vocation: to *theologians*, in order that such a culture have before all else a solid theological foundation; to *those who work in the mass-media*, that they may know how to enter into dialogue with young people; to *educators*, that they may know how to respond to the aspirations and sensitivities of the young; to *spiritual directors*, so that each young person might be helped to recognize that voice which calls him by name. I turn, finally, to you who are already consecrated to the Lord and, in a special way, to you *priests*: you have already heard and recognized the call of the Good Shepherd; lend your own voice to him who today still calls many to follow him. Speak to your young people, letting them hear about the beauty of following the Lord, and accompany them along the paths of life, which at times can be full of difficulties. Above all, witness with your life to the joy of being in the Lord's service.

5. And now let us pray together:

Lord, Jesus Christ, Good Shepherd of our souls, you who know your sheep and know how to reach man's heart, open the minds and hearts of those young people who search for and await a word of truth for their lives; let them understand that only in the mystery of your Incarnation do they find full light; arouse the courage of those who know where to seek the truth, but fear that what you ask will be too demanding; stir the heart of those young people who would follow you, but who cannot overcome doubts and fears, and who in the end follow other voices and other paths which lead nowhere. You who are the Word of the Father, the Word which creates and saves, the Word which enlightens and sustains hearts, conquer with your Spirit the resistance and delays of indecisive hearts; arouse in those whom you call the courage of love's answer: "Here I am, send me!" (Is 6:8).

Virgin Mary, young daughter of Israel, support with your motherly love those youths to whom the Father will grant that they hear his voice; protect those who are already consecrated. Let them repeat with you the yes of a joyful and irrevocable gift of self. Amen.

With my Apostolic Blessing.

At Castel Gandolfo, 8 September 1992 Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary