



The Holy See

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

Wednesday, 24 January 1979

Dearly Beloved,

The meeting this morning, so joyful and cordial, gives me—as every Wednesday—such comfort and such consolation. To see this immense basilica brimming over with boys and girls and young people, so full of vitality and enthusiasm, is a sight that makes the Pope exclaim: "Here is the real, the authentic youth of modern society; the youth that is gay and serene because it has a great friend and brother: Christ Jesus, Man and God!"

1. I would like to greet you one by one; but embracing you all in my glance and my heart, I address a special thought to the most numerous groups: to the pilgrimage of Sisters, teachers and pupils, with the members of their families, of the Roman Institute "Sant'Orsola"; to the pilgrimage of teachers and pupils of the junior and senior secondary schools of Casalpalocco; to that of the Roman state secondary school "Giulio Salvadori"; to that of the Neapolitan Institutes of the Barnabite Fathers, "Bianchi" and "Denza".

2. Even if Christmas time is now over, I wish to present briefly to your consideration the *attitude of the Magi*. When, on the indication of the mysterious star, they found Mary with Jesus the child, "they fell down and worshipped him" and then "opening their treasures, offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh". Also modern man—the modern youth—meets God when he opens up to him with the interior gift of his human "ego", to accept and reciprocate the immense gifts which he bestowed, in the first place: the gift of existence, the gift of the Redemption, the gift of the Faith.

And that Child who accepted the gifts of the Magi is still always the One before whom men and whole peoples "open their treasures". The gifts of the human spirit, in the act of this opening before God-incarnate, take on particular value, become the treasures of the various cultures, the spiritual riches of the peoples, of the nations, the common heritage of the whole of mankind. He is

the centre of this exchange: the same one who accepted the gifts of the Magi. He himself, who is the visible and incarnate Gift, causes the opening up of souls and that exchange of gifts, from which live not only individuals, but also peoples, nations, the whole of mankind.

3. These reflections, beloved young people, are connected with that which I am about to tell you now. Our meeting today has a special significance for me and for you. Tomorrow I shall undertake, with the grace of God, a journey to Mexico, to take part, at Puebla in the Meeting of the Episcopal Conference of Latin America. I will become acquainted with the great Mexican people, which has an ancient, glorious history, and which has made great progress in recent times. But, in the midst of political, technical, and civil progress, the Mexican soul has shown and clearly shows, that it wishes to be and to remain Christian: giving proof not only of good religious sentiments, but also of remarkable, in fact, sometimes heroic fortitude and firmness of faith, as many people will remember.

Going to that nation, I will follow in the footsteps of so many pilgrims who go from the whole of America to the Sanctuary of the Mother of God at Guadalupe. And in that sacred place I will pray for the whole of mankind, for the Church, for you, young people, that you may always be good, pure and joyful, and that you may prepare, with commitment and dedication, for the tasks you will have to tackle, before long, when you are adults.

And you, on your side, pray for the Pope during this week, that he may be in these days a messenger of Christ, that is, of faith, love, and peace.

I give you my fatherly blessing.

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