



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

TO A GROUP OF SALESIAN STUDENTS *Saturday, 5 May 1979 Beloved Young People,* 1. My fatherly and joyful welcome to you, dear boys and girls, who attend the organizations of the Salesians and of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, gathered here to meet and listen to the Pope, representing also all the children and young people who belong to the religious associations, schools, vocational centres, cultural, recreational and social groups, inspired and directed by the Sons of Don Bosco. To all of you present here, to all your friends and companions, to all Salesian youth, who for over a century have been continuing their ardent and courageous march along the paths of the world, goes my affectionate greeting, charged with emotion and hopes: you are the hope, the expectation of a more just, more dignified, and more peaceful future. The Pope regards you with intensely promising feelings and good wishes which, through you, are extended to the whole of mankind. I thank you for this grand manifestation of affection and, in return for such irrepressible enthusiasm, address to you just one greeting: Long live Salesian youth! Faithful to the spirit of Don Bosco, a great saint and outstanding educator, you wish to pay homage to the Successor of Peter, confirming to him the faithfulness of your love and your service, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the canonization of Domenico Savio, a boy of the Oratory of Valdocco, the favourite pupil and precious fruit of the work of formation of Mamma Margherita's son. You are engaged, throughout this year, in a broad series of initiatives, both in the various local centres and on the national scale, to give new and vigorous impetus to youth associations of Christian inspiration and to widen the educational system of Don Bosco, applying its basic criteria, its key-principles, to the requirements of modern times. You expect from the Pope a word of guidance and encouragement for this renewed youth action in Italy and I am here with you, in the first place, to invoke the wisdom of the Spirit of the Lord on this important initiative, which is so dear to the Church and to her Pastors. 2. The first indication I wish to offer you is an invitation to optimism, hope, and trust. It is true that humanity is going through a difficult phase and that we often have the painful and heartfelt impression that the forces of evil, in so many manifestations of associated life prevail. Too often honesty, justice, respect for man's dignity are obliged to mark time, or even succumb. Yet we are called to overcome the world with our faith (cf. 1 Jn 5:4), because we belong to him who, with his death and resurrection, has obtained for each of us victory over sin and death, and has made us, therefore, capable of a humble, serene, but certain success in overcoming evil with good. Dear young people, we belong to him, to Christ, and it is he who is victorious in us. We must believe this deeply, we must live this certainty; otherwise the difficulties that continually arise will have, unfortunately, the power to gnaw insidiously within our spirit, giving rise to discouragement, acceptance, and supine adaptation to the arrogant sway of evil. The most subtle temptation that today afflicts Christians, and the young in particular, is precisely that of renunciation of hope in the victory of Christ. The prompter of every snare, the Evil One, has always striven to extinguish the light of this hope in the heart of every

man. Christian struggle is not an easy way, but we must follow it, aware that we possess an inner force of transformation, communicated to us with the divine life which has been bestowed on us in Christ the Lord. By virtue of your witness, you will make it understood that the highest human values are undertaken in a Christianity lived consistently, and that the faith of the Gospel does not propose just a new vision of man and the universe, but bestows above all the capacity of bringing about this renewal. In this connection, I recall to you the words addressed to the young by the Council Fathers at the conclusion of the Ecumenical Council: "The Church looks to you with confidence and with love... She possesses what constitutes the strength and the charm of youth, that is to say, the ability to rejoice with what is beginning, to give oneself unreservedly, to renew oneself and to set out again for new conquests." Without certain hope in Christ's victory in you and in the world that surrounds you, there can be no optimism; and without optimism that serene gaiety which is characteristic of the young cannot exist. There are still too many young people, today, who have already renounced youth³. The Pope's second suggestion for you and for all those in charge of your human and Christian education, concerns the urgent need, felt nearly everywhere, of the revival of sound models of Catholic youth associations. It is not a question of creating militant expressions deprived of ideal impetus and based on the force of numbers, but of animating real communities, instilled with the spirit of kindness, mutual respect, and service, and above all made compact by the same faith and by one unique hope. The present generation of the young, even when they avail themselves of the comforts offered by the consumer civilization, feel that such prodigality conceals an illusory fascination, and that they cannot stop at the hedonistic experience of materialistic opulence. You are, therefore, in continual quest—to live it is already to respond to the Christian vocation—of the true value of your life, of your personal responsibility. Now, in this quest, it is not possible to proceed in isolation, precisely because of the individual's frailty which is exposed to the most varied attacks. In adhesion to a group, in the spontaneity and homogeneity of a circle of friends, in constructive comparison of ideas and initiatives, in mutual support, the vitality of that social renewal to which you all aspire can be established and preserved. You young people aim at the precious goal of community implementation. of conversation, of friendship, of giving oneself and of receiving, of love. Youth associations are flourishing again: the Pope exhorts you to be faithful, clear-sighted, and resourceful in this effort to make these societies more and more far-reaching. It is a pressing invitation that I address to all those responsible for the Christian education of youth, that is, of the men of tomorrow⁴. Where will you find the strength, dear young people and friends, to sustain your optimism, to give your associations a soul? Domenico Savio, on the occasion of the proclamation of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, on 8 December 1854, before the altar of Mary—as Don Bosco testifies—renewed the promises of First Communion, saying among other things: "Mary, I give you my heart, see that it is always yours; Jesus and Mary, always be my friends." Beloved sons, here is where to get the strength for your programmes of renewal: Jesus and Mary. They are not only models, they are friends: even more, they are part of your life. You belong to them; they belong to you. It is a question of knowing it and believing it. Jesus is the Messiah of every age, also of this promising eve of the twenty-first century. He is the Man of hope, the Man who is the cornerstone of humanity. He is the One who reveals and accomplishes in us the divine prophecies of personal and social liberation. He is the Liberator, the Man-God of our salvation. Your youthful commitment of life, in all its expressions, in study and in work, in family and in society, must lead you to recognize inwardly and proclaim that Jesus is he who establishes the value, the joy and the hope of every man. Have the intelligence and the

courage—the Church and the Pope ask it of you—to make your lives an acclamation and testimony to Christ our salvation. A word about Mary, the Mother of Jesus and Mother of the Church, to whose loving patronage God himself willed to entrust, through her obedient "Yes", the fate of the whole of mankind. The Son assigns to her the motherly task of imploring individual and collective salvation for us. Dear young people, the revival, in the present time, of true Christian values such as brotherhood, justice and peace, is entrusted once more to the intervention and motherly pedagogy of Mary. For today, too, Mary is Mother of divine grace, she is Queen of victories.⁵ And I conclude these words of mine with an invitation to Christian fortitude, a virtue which in quite a particular way is suited to the young. Be intrepid witnesses to the Risen Christ and never retreat before the obstacles you meet along the path of your lives as Christians. Optimism, union, fortitude: that is my wish for you. Once more, I am grateful for your visit, which has given me such joy. Extending my greeting to all those who have accompanied you here, and especially to members of the Superior Council of Salesians and of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and to your parents and relatives, I invoke on you all the outpouring of heavenly favours and joys, while I willingly impart to you my Apostolic Blessing. © Copyright 1979 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana