



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF SCOTLAND

Murrayfield (Great Britain), 31 May 1982

*Dear young people of Scotland!*¹ Thank you for such warm words of welcome. I am happy that my first contact is with you, the pride of your beloved country and the promise of its bright future! You are at the great crossroads of your lives and you must decide how your future can be lived happily, accepting the responsibilities which you hope will be placed squarely on your shoulders, playing an active role in the world around you. You ask me for encouragement and guidance, and most willingly I offer some words of advice to all of you, in the name of Jesus Christ. In the first place I say this: you must never think that you are alone in deciding your future! Secondly: when deciding your future, you must not decide for yourself alone!² There is an episode in the life of Saint Andrew, the patron saint of Scotland, which can serve as an example for what I wish to tell you. Jesus had been teaching a crowd of five thousand people about the Kingdom of God. They had listened carefully all day, and as evening approached he did not want to send them away hungry, so he told his disciples to give them something to eat. He said this really to test them, because he knew exactly what he was going to do. One of the disciples - it was Saint Andrew - said: "There is a small boy here with five barley loaves and two fishes; but what is that between so many?" Jesus took the loaves, blessed them, and gave them out to all who were sitting waiting; he then did the same with the fish, giving out as much as was wanted. Later the disciples collected twelve baskets of the fragments that were left over. Now the point I wish to make is this: Saint Andrew gave Jesus all there was available, and Jesus miraculously fed those five thousand people and still had something left over. It is exactly the same with your lives. Left alone to face the difficult challenges of life today, you feel conscious of your inadequacy and afraid of what the future may hold for you. But what I say to you is this: place your lives in the hands of Jesus. He will accept you, and bless you, and he will make such use of your lives as will be beyond your greatest expectations! In other words: surrender yourselves, like so many loaves and fishes, into the all-powerful, sustaining hands of God and you will find yourselves transformed with "newness of life", with fullness of life. "Unload your burden on the Lord, and he will support you".³ It is not of primary importance what walk of life naturally attracts you - industry or commerce, science or engineering, medicine or nursing, the priestly or religious life, or the law, or teaching, or some other form of public service - the principle remains always the same: hand the direction of your life over to Jesus and allow him to transform you and obtain the best results, the one he wishes from you. Only Christianity has given a religious meaning to work and recognizes the spiritual value of technological progress. There is no vocation more religious than

work! Saint Benedict used to say to his monks that every implement in the monastery must be regarded as a sacred vessel. A Catholic layman or laywoman is someone who takes work seriously. Why? Because, as Saint Paul says, “I live now not with my own life, but with the life of Christ who lives in me”; “Life to me is Christ”.⁴ How can this be? That is a good question. Our Blessed Lady, Mary of Nazareth, asked that very same question when God’s extraordinary plan for her life was first explained to her. And the answer which Mary received from Almighty God is the identical answer that he gives to you: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow . . . nothing is impossible to God”. This is the one same Holy Spirit who came to you at Baptism and again, with increased vigour, at Confirmation, precisely to prepare and fortify you for the challenge of life. Not one of you is without him! No one must ever feel alone! The Spirit of the Lord has been given to you! Who is this Holy Spirit? He is God himself. The Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. He is sent to each of us by the Father and the Son. He is their greatest gift and he remains constantly with us. He abides in us. We have difficulty in forming a concept of the Holy Spirit in our mind. It is of the highest importance, however, that we have some understanding of his influence and his activity in our lives.⁵ The clearest description of the work of the Holy Spirit has been given by Saint Paul, who said that the Spirit produces “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control”. Qualities such as these are ideal in every walk of life and in all circumstances: at home, with your parents and brothers and sisters; at school, with your teachers and friends; in the factory or at the university; with all the people you meet. The Prophet Isaiah also attributed special gifts to the Holy Spirit: “a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and fortitude, a spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord”. Saint Paul is right in saying: “Since the Spirit is our life, let us be directed by the Spirit”.⁶ With gifts and qualities such as these we are equal to any task and capable of overcoming any difficulties. Yet our lives remain our own, and the Spirit acts on each of us differently, in harmony with our individual personality and the characteristics we have inherited from our parents and from the upbringing received in our homes. If you pause to reflect for a moment or two you will begin to realize how much you experience the presence of the Holy Spirit in your lives, especially through the goodness and kindness that other people show to you, even though you do not actually see him in the world. The Holy Spirit is a living Spirit and his action is interwoven with all the realities of our lives, so that daily we encounter him in other people, but also in particular happenings and in the things of nature, which so frequently direct our thoughts to God. And my visit to you today, our being together, is a work of the Holy Spirit.⁷ Because he is so near to us, yet so unobtrusive, we should turn to the Holy Spirit instinctively in all our needs and ask him for his guidance and help. God has sent him to us because of our helplessness, as Saint Paul says so beautifully: “The Spirit too comes to help us in our weakness. For when we cannot choose words in order to pray properly, the Spirit himself expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words”. What more could God do for us? What more can we expect of God than that?⁸ If the Holy Spirit were to be withdrawn then we would immediately notice the difference. Saint Paul tells us what happens when we refuse to be guided by the Spirit: “when self-indulgence is at work the results are obvious: fornication, gross indecency and sexual irresponsibility . . . feuds and wrangling, jealousy, bad temper and quarrels; disagreements, factions, envy, drunkenness, orgies and similar things. I warn you now, as I warned you before: those who behave like this will not inherit the kingdom of God”. This too is part of the liberating Good News of the Gospel. A correct understanding of the teaching of Jesus makes us react in a creative and cooperative fashion to the challenges that face us in life, without fear of acting mistakenly and alone, but under the guiding influence of his own Holy Spirit at every moment and in every circumstance, be it great or small.⁹ This extraordinary divine assistance is guaranteed to all who offer their lives to Jesus. God the Father’s plan of salvation embraces all mankind; his one same Holy Spirit is sent as gift to all who are open to receive him in faith. We each form a part of God’s overall plan. An exclusively personal and private attitude to salvation is not Christian and is born of a fundamentally mistaken mentality. Consequently, your lives cannot be

lived in isolation, and even in deciding your future you must always keep in mind your responsibility as Christians towards others. There is no place in your lives for apathy or indifference to the world around you. There is no place in the Church for selfishness. You must show a conscientious concern that the standards of society fit the plan of God. Christ counts on you, so that the effects of his Holy Spirit may radiate from you to others and in that way permeate every aspect of the public and the private sector of national life. "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good".¹⁰ Do not let the sight of the world in turmoil shake your confidence in Jesus. Not even the threat of nuclear war. Remember his words: "Be brave: I have conquered the world". Let no temptation discourage you. Let no failure hold you down. There is nothing that you cannot master with the help of the One who gives you strength.¹¹ Follow the example of Our Blessed Lady, the perfect model of trust in God and wholehearted cooperation in his divine plan for the salvation of mankind. Keep in mind the advice she gave the servants at Cana: "Do whatever he tells you". Jesus changed the water into wine for his Mother on that occasion. Through her intercession he will transform your lives. I must continue now with my pilgrimage through your beloved Scotland. I take leave of you happy in the thought that your young hearts accompany me on my journey, and that I have the support of your daily prayers. For my part I wish to assure you, each and every one of you, of my love in Christ Jesus. Young people of Scotland, I thank you. Keep the faith joyfully; and my blessing be with you. *Oìgridh na h-Alba, tha mi toirt taing dhùibh. Cumaibh an creideamh gu sòlasach; agus mo bheannachd leibh.*