



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO MALTA

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE REPRESENTATIVES OF MALTA'S SCIENTIFIC, CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC LIFE

St. Julien Church, Sliema

Sunday, 27 May 1990

*Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,*1. It is for me a great pleasure to find myself among the esteemed *representatives of Malta's scientific, cultural and artistic life*. Our meeting is a recognition of the importance which we all attach to learning, to the search for knowledge, to intellectual exchange and artistic achievement, to the sublime values of Truth and Beauty in mankind's arduous but also exciting quest for genuine human advancement." *What man can know the intentions of God?*

Who can divine the will of the Lord?" (Sap. 9, 13). These words of the Book of Wisdom which introduced our conversation this morning encourage us to dwell for a moment *on the present conditions of our culture and civilization*. At a time of wide-ranging ideological and political transformations, of dangerous imbalances in the world economy, of new but not always comforting advances in science and technology, we are confronted with a burning issue which looms high on the horizon of the approaching new millennium. For societies threatened by insecurity, by instances of dramatic environmental degradation, by endemic unemployment, by political uncertainty, the pervading question which the future poses is this: *what is to become of the human person?* Politicians and magistrates, engineers and lawyers, researchers and doctors, artists, educators, social workers and students: you all perceive a disquiet sometimes vague but ever present in your inmost consciousness. The question is being brought into ever sharper focus by the important events we are experiencing and the unknown elements of the months and years ahead. No one who claims to look critically at events can fail to feel a deep personal involvement. Why? Because, as this century and this millennium come to a close, what is at stake is *the very meaning and direction of the human family's pilgrimage through history*.2. You who are the

intellectual and cultural elite of society are involved in a special way. The future depends to a great extent on *the cultural perspective in which individuals and peoples are allowed to develop and work out their destiny*. Recent history has drastically altered the cultural frame of reference. In particular, the series of events in Europe during the last few months shows clearly the inadequacy and failure of a culture which was not built on the primacy of the spiritual dimension of the human person. Of course the economic, political and social dimensions of life require careful attention and forthright commitment on the part of all. But at the same time it is necessary to reaffirm adamantly *the primacy of ethics over technology, the primacy of "being" over "having"*. This is especially imperative when we are immersed in a false culture of "appearances", the result of an unbridled consumer mentality detrimental to the deepest needs of individuals and communities. The present challenge facing Europe is to rediscover its own deepest roots. In accepting this challenge, *European culture is forcefully called to account for the Christian faith that gave form to its peoples*.³ Dear friends, the principal task of those with responsibility for the lives of individuals and nations is to foster *a way of life that fully responds to the unique and inalienable dignity of human beings*. The task is enormous. It involves working for the full and genuine development of peoples in a climate of effective cooperation, for the defence of human rights, the promotion of family life, the protection of workers, the building of a more just and fraternal community, with respect for the Creator's will in nature and in all areas of life. Rediscovered freedom is leading peoples long condemned to silence, fear and want to proclaim aloud the value of the human person, the spiritual character of life, the need to express individual worth and personal responsibility by taking part actively in the processes determining civic and national life. Men and women of culture that you are, you know that the restoration of external freedoms is only the first stage, the first step. *The exercise of freedom must be accompanied by a growth in moral and spiritual maturity*. Unfortunately, as we approach the third Christian millennium our dominant culture shows signs of a weakening of moral commitment and a narrow sense of spiritual inspiration. People are often more sensitive to feelings, emotions and impressions than to thought, reflection and discernment. To act without reason is not worthy of man, whose freedom is based on knowledge of the truth which enlightens his judgement. The conquest of authentic freedom is radically jeopardized if truth, painstakingly acquired through reason and wonderfully deepened through openness to the word of God, is disregarded. *Without reference to the truth, human beings can never free themselves from irresponsibility and fear*. Jesus Christ stated quite plainly: "the truth shall make you free" (Cfr. *Jo.* 8, 32). What applies to individuals applies also to nations. It is in accepting the full truth about our human condition— which corresponds to God's design for human beings, revealed in Christ, the way, the truth and the life (Cfr. *Ibid.* 14, 16) — that our contemporaries will reach their full stature as men and women freed from fear and vain illusions.⁴ Malta is not unaffected by the problems and changes transforming the cultural as well as the political face of Europe and the world. Because of its geographical position and history, *Malta presents a marvellous symbiosis of European and Mediterranean cultures and is thus well placed to observe and participate in the present changes of outlook*. Being at the crossroads of fruitful exchanges between various civilizations, Malta has remained faithful to her traditions of hospitality, as shown recently by the meeting here between the United States and Soviet Heads of State. The

Christian faith that came to you two thousand years ago has deeply imbued your family life, your traditions, and almost every manifestation of your character. However, the *decline of traditional values* on the one hand and of ideological tensions on the other has left many of our contemporaries defenceless, disorientated, and in many cases with a *dramatic crisis of identity*. You who are among the leaders of the cultural life of your country cannot remain deaf to those who cry out in anguish in their quest for meaning and certainty. That would be to betray their expectations, especially in the case of young people on the threshold of adult life. The extent and novelty of the problems affecting the evolution of society must not cause you to ignore your fellow-citizens, your brothers and sisters, *considered in their real existence* and not in the light of abstract ideological concepts. It is to real people in their actual condition that the Creator addresses the call to live in the fullness of dignity and freedom. Your mission, I repeat, is immense. It is no less than an *untiring effort to seek and uphold the truth about man's life and destiny*.⁵ As Catholics you have an *authentic vocation to evangelize the cultural environment* in which you live and work. This task springs from your baptismal commitment. It has nothing to do with imposing a preconceived and unilateral model of cultural life. Rather, it concerns the "recognition and possible purification of the elements that critically burden existing culture... and the elevation of these cultures through the riches which have their source in the Gospel and the Christian faith" (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Christifideles Laici*, 44). *Your active presence* as Catholic lay men and women in the world of scientific, intellectual and artistic endeavour is *needed*, both as individuals and as members of the various cultural and apostolic associations which permit you to work more effectively for the progress of your people. Your activities in this field should be marked by courage and intellectual creativity, and above all by a profound sense of love and service. As men and women of faith you consider the mystery of human life in relation to the mystery of Jesus Christ, true God and true man. In him our human condition is raised and brought into a dynamic personal communion with the Creator. In the Incarnation, the Son of God has united himself in a certain way with every human person. He has truly been made one of us, like us in all things except sin (Cfr. *Gaudium et Spes*, 22). Through the sending of his Spirit and the life of grace Christ renews people from within, making them capable of fulfilling the *new commandment of love* which is to characterize the new humanity born from his Cross and Resurrection. It is in the construction of this civilization of love that your cultural endeavours and achievements reach their highest value and have their most beneficial effect on society. In following this path you know that your efforts call for a sharing in the *wisdom which God alone can give*. May you make your own the prayer in the Scripture Reading we listened to at the beginning of this meeting: "Send wisdom forth from your throne of glory to help me and toil with me and teach me what is pleasing to you" (*Sap.* 9, 10)⁶. Theologians, philosophers, specialists in the natural and human sciences, teachers and researchers, together with your students: you constitute a highly qualified community dedicated to intellectual endeavour, with a sublime mission of service to the wider Maltese society. I earnestly hope that you will always be motivated by a sincere passion for the truth and a profound love of your fellow human beings. You who are heirs to an ancient heritage, lift your eyes to the full breadth of the surrounding Mediterranean and to the peoples inhabiting its shores. The challenge before you is to radiate an example. May your love of

freedom, your love of truth, your love of justice make these Islands, set in the heart of the Mediterranean, a sanctuary of peace and brotherhood, steeped in *the truth and love which Christ, the Redeemer of Man, came to bring*. Upon all of you and on your families I invoke Almighty God's abundant gifts, and I gladly impart my Apostolic Blessing.

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