



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE ARCHBISHOP OF LUXEMBOURG
ON HIS "AD LIMINA VISIT"**

Friday, 19 December 1997

1. As you make your *ad limina* visit, I am pleased to receive you in the house of Peter's Successor. For every Bishop this is an incomparable opportunity to strengthen his ministry by praying at the tombs of Sts Peter and Paul, and for experiencing important moments of ecclesial communion through your various meetings with the members of the curial dicasteries. Through the intercession of the Apostles, may you continue your pastoral mission with the joy, strength and vision granted by the Holy Spirit!

2. In your quinquennial report, you described to me the spiritual vitality of the Archdiocese of Luxembourg. With a view to the Great Jubilee and the new evangelization, which it is the Church's duty to undertake in the third millennium, you have involved the archdiocesan community in a Synod process entitled: *Church 2005: On the Way with Jesus Christ, Together for Mankind*. Thus you are appropriately inviting pastors and the faithful to contemplate Christ and the Christian mystery through formation programmes, constantly renewed acceptance of God's word, a detailed study of the liturgy and a more intense community life. Indeed it is through spiritual and intellectual growth that all the members of God's People increase their faith and are more deliberately involved in mission, each one according to his own charism and the service he has been given to accomplish in the Church and in society.

3. I would like to pay tribute to the work done by priests, who are devoted to faithfully transmitting the Gospel, the Church's teaching, and in particular the Council's message, in order to lead and sanctify the Christian people, so that they may all become disciples of Christ. I am aware of the importance and multiplicity of their tasks, especially at a time when the shortage of priests is becoming painful. I urge them not to be discouraged and to continue to be watchful in their prayers and in their spiritual life. Thus they will rekindle the gift of God that is in them through the laying on of hands (cf. 2 Tm 1:6), in order fully to exercise the ministry entrusted to them.

4. Pastors are called to carry out their mission in co-operation with the laity, in a co-ordinated way and without confusing what pertains to the ordained ministry with what belongs to the universal priesthood of the baptized. "Because of each member's unique and irrepeatable character ... each individual is placed at the service of the growth of the ecclesial community while, at the same time, singularly receiving and sharing in the common richness of all the Church" (Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, n. 28). In this perspective where riches and diversity are at the service of all, priests are invited "to be sincere in their appreciation and promotion of lay people's dignity and of the special role the laity have to play in the Church's mission" (Second Vatican Council, *Presbyterorum ordinis*, n. 9). In the ecclesial tasks that can be entrusted to them by virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation, or in the lay associations in which they participate, by being mindful of the criteria of ecclesiality which I have had occasion to recall (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, n. 30), the faithful realize that they cannot replace the priest or deacon, but must work together with them in a common task, the building up of Christ's Body which is the Church, "the evangelization and sanctification of men" (Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam actuositatem*, n. 20, a).

5. Through the harmonious co-operation of the different archdiocesan services, you have enhanced the Christian formation of adults. I am pleased with the efforts made in this area. I am sure that you can already perceive their results in the local Church, particularly in the quality of the liturgy and in the collaboration of the faithful in the different ecclesial tasks. I encourage lay people to continue to play an active part in the parish community to which they belong, for it is especially in the heart of the parish that the legitimate pluralism of sensitivities and forms of action is expressed and useful collaboration takes place. We are given brothers and sisters in the Church so that each may contribute to the benefit of the whole Body.

It is also for addressing the moral issues of our time and for renewing the temporal order that lay people constantly need to deepen their knowledge of the Gospel message. They will then be better qualified to accept commitments and responsibilities in the service of their brothers and sisters, within the framework of a civil society built on the objective laws of morality (cf. Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, n. 16). In the modern world, marked by materialism and the power of money, the teaching of the Church's social doctrine is especially useful for recalling that man is the centre of social life and that the development of solidarity and fraternal life implies "becoming more keenly aware of the discrepancies" between persons, and "a change of mentality and of attitude" (ibid., n. 63). From this standpoint, your Archdiocese also has a specific role in the greater Europe. By acknowledging the significant charitable efforts made possible in recent years by the members of your Archdiocese, I urge them to continue and to intensify their support of individuals and peoples who have need of their know-how and assistance. Thus they will demonstrate in a tangible way the meaning of catholicity, which is openness to universality according to the example given by the first Christian communities (cf. Rom 16:25-27).

6. I would like to express my cordial thanks to the institutes of consecrated life, whose apostolate

is deeply appreciated. It is particularly appropriate to stress the importance of their involvement in education, in which many young people can become aware of their vocation, and in health-care services. Institutions for the formation of young people must retain the full attention of Christian communities and must mobilize many adults, parents, professors, teachers, priests and religious. Young people need to receive a suitable moral and spiritual education and to be guided in the development of their personality, in the preparation of their future and in the fulfilment of their specific vocation, whether it is to marriage, to the priesthood or to the consecrated life. In this regard, I am pleased with the fresh vitality of the youth movements which you shared with me. They have an essential role to play in your country's youth apostolate.

7. Through you, I also extend my affectionate greetings to the Melkite and Ukrainian Catholic communities in your Archdiocese. Please convey my warm encouragement to the priests, deacons, religious and faithful, who are all called to work in communion with you in the Church's mission. Upon you and on your diocesan community I invoke the maternal intercession of Our Lady of Luxembourg, Comfort of the Afflicted, and St Willibrord, and I wholeheartedly impart to you my Apostolic Blessing.

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