



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
FOR THE VIII WORLD YOUTH DAY**

"I came that they might have life, and have it to the full" (Jn 10:10).

Dear Young People,

1. Following our meetings in Rome, Buenos Aires, Santiago de Compostela and Czestochowa, our pilgrimage through contemporary history continues. The next stop will be in Denver, in the heart of the United States, in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, where in August 1993 the Eighth World Youth Day will be celebrated. Together with many young Americans, young people from every nation will gather together, as on previous occasions, as if to symbolize the living faith, or at least the most urgent questionings of the world of youth from the five continents.

These regular celebrations are not meant to be *mere rituals*, justified merely by the fact that they are repeated; in fact, they spring from *a deep-seated need* originating in the human heart and reflected in the life of the pilgrim and missionary Church.

The World Youth Days and Gatherings are *providential opportunities to break our journey for a while*: they enable young people to examine their deepest aspirations, to heighten their sense of belonging to the Church, to proclaim their common faith in the crucified and risen Christ with increasing joy and courage. They provide an opportunity for many young people to make bold and enlightened choices which can help steer the future course of history under the powerful but gentle guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We are witnessing a "succession of empires" in our world — the repeated attempts to create political unity which particular individuals have tried to impose on others. The results are there for all to see. True and lasting unity cannot be created by coercion and violence. It can be achieved only by building on the foundations of a common heritage of values accepted and shared by all,

values such as respect for the dignity of the human person, a willingness to welcome life, the defence of human rights, and openness to transcendence and the realm of the spirit.

In view of this, and as a response to the challenges of our changing times, the World Youth Gathering is meant to be *a first step and a proposal of a new unity*, a unity which transcends the political order but enlightens it. It is based on awareness that only the Creator of the human heart can adequately satisfy its deepest yearnings. World Youth Day is thus a proclamation of Christ who says to the men and women of our own century too: "I came that they might have life, and have it to the full" (Jn 10:10).

2. And so we come to the heart of the theme that will guide our reflections throughout this year of preparation for the next World Youth Day.

Different languages have different words to express what no one would ever wish to lose under any circumstances, what constitutes the expectation, longing and hope of all mankind. But *there is no better word than "life"* to sum up comprehensively the greatest aspiration of all humanity. "Life" indicates the sum total of all the goods that people desire, and at the same time what makes them possible, obtainable and lasting.

Is not the history of mankind deeply marked by a frantic and tragic search for something or someone able to free it from death and guarantee life?

Human existence has its moments of crisis and weariness, despondency and gloom. Such a sense of dissatisfaction is clearly reflected in much of today's literature and films. In the light of this distress, it is easier to understand the particular difficulties of adolescents and young people stepping out with uncertainty to encounter all the fascinating promises and dark uncertainties which are part of life.

Jesus came to provide the ultimate answer to the yearning for life and for the infinite which his Heavenly Father had poured into our hearts when he created us. At the climax of revelation, the incarnate Word proclaims, "I am the Life" (Jn 14:6), and "I came that they might have life" (Jn 10:10). But what life? Jesus' intention was clear: *the very life of God*, which surpasses all the possible aspirations of the human heart (cf. 1 Cor 2:9). The fact is that through the grace of Baptism we are already God's children (cf. 1 Jn 3:1-2).

Jesus came to meet men and women, to heal the sick and the suffering, to free those possessed by devils and to raise the dead: he gave himself on the cross and rose again from the dead, revealing that he is *the Lord of life*: the author and the source of life without end.

3. Our daily experience tells us that life is marked by *sin* and threatened by *death*, despite the desire for good which beats in our hearts and the desire for life which courses through our veins.

However little heed we pay to ourselves and to the frustrations which life brings us, we discover that *everything within us impels us to transcend ourselves*, urges us to overcome the temptation of superficiality or despair. It is then that human beings are called to become disciples of that other One who infinitely transcends them, in order to enter at last into true life.

There are also *false prophets* and *false teachers of how to live*. First of all there are those who teach people to leave the body, time and space in order to be able to enter into what they call "true life". They condemn creation, and in the name of deceptive spirituality they lead thousands of young people along the paths of an impossible liberation which eventually leaves them even more isolated, victims of their own illusions and of the evil in their own lives.

Seemingly at the opposite extreme, there are the teachers of the "fleeting moment", who invite people to give free rein to every instinctive urge or longing, with the result that individuals fall prey to a sense of anguish and anxiety leading them to seek refuge in false, artificial paradises, such as that of drugs.

There are also those who teach that the meaning of life lies solely in the quest for success, the accumulation of wealth, the development of personal abilities, without regard for the needs of others or respect for values, at times not even for the fundamental value of life itself.

These and other kinds of false teachers of life, also numerous in the modern world, propose goals which not only fail to bring satisfaction but often intensify and exacerbate the thirst that burns in the human heart.

Who then can understand and satisfy our expectations?

Who but the One who is the Author of Life can satisfy the expectations that he himself has placed in our hearts? He draws close to each and every one of us in order to announce a hope that will never disappoint; he who is both the way and the life: *the pathway into life*.

Left to ourselves, we could never achieve the ends for which we have been created. Within us there is a promise which we find we are incapable of attaining. But the Son of God who came among us has given his personal assurance: "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life" (Jn 14:6). As Saint Augustine so strikingly phrased it, Christ "wishes to create a place in which it is possible for all people to find true life". This "place" is his Body and his Spirit, in which the whole of human life, redeemed and forgiven, is renewed and made divine.

4. In fact, the life of each of us was thought of and willed by God before the world began, and we can rightly repeat with the Psalmist: "O Lord, you have probed me and you know me... truly you have formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother's womb" (Ps 139).

This life, which was in God from the beginning (cf. Jn 1:4), is a life which is freely given, which holds nothing back for itself and is freely and unstintingly communicated to others. It is light, "the real light, which gives light to every man" (Jn 1:9). It is God, who came to make his dwelling among us (cf. Jn 1:14), to show us the path to the immortality belonging to the children of God, and to make it accessible to us.

In the mystery of his cross and resurrection, Christ has destroyed death and sin, and has bridged the infinite distance that separates all people from new life in him. "I am the resurrection and the life", he proclaims. "Whoever believes in me, though he should die, will come to life, and whoever is alive and believes in me will never die" (Jn 11:25).

Christ achieves all this by pouring out his Spirit, the giver of life, *in the sacraments*; especially in *Baptism*, the sacrament by which the fragile life which we receive from our parents and which is destined to end in death becomes instead a path to eternity; in the sacrament of *Penance* which continually renews God's life within us by the forgiveness of sins; and in the *Eucharist*, the "bread of life" (cf. Jn 6:34), which feeds the "living" and gives strength to their steps during their pilgrimage on earth, so that they can say with the Apostle Paul: "I still live my human life, but it is a life of faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me".

5. New life, the gift of the risen Lord, then spreads far and wide, flowing into every sphere of human experience: the family, the school, the workplace, everyday activities and leisure time.

That new life begins to flower here and now. The sign of its presence and growth is love. As Saint John tells us: "That we have passed from death to life we know because we love the brothers" (1 Jn 3:14) with a true love that is put into practice. Life flourishes in the gift of self to others, in accordance with each person's vocation — in the ministerial priesthood, in consecrated virginity, in marriage — so that all can share the gifts they have received, in a spirit of solidarity, especially with the poor and the needy.

The person who is "begotten from above" thus becomes able to "see the kingdom" of God (cf. Jn 3:3), and to take part in building up social structures more worthy of every individual and of all humanity, in promoting and defending the culture of life against all threats of death.

6. Dear young people, you ask a question that many of your friends often put to you: how and where can we come to know this life? How and where can we live it?

You can find the answer by yourselves, if you really try to live faithfully in the love of Christ (cf. Jn 15:9). Then you will personally experience the truth of those words of his: "I am ... the life" (Jn 14:6) and you will be able to bring this joyful message of hope to everyone. Christ has made you his ambassadors, the primary evangelizers of your contemporaries.

The next World Youth Day in Denver will give us an ideal opportunity to reflect together on this theme of great interest to everyone. We must therefore prepare for this important meeting, first of all by looking around us to discover and, make a list, as it were, of all the "places" where Christ is present as the source of life. They may be our parish communities, apostolic groups and movements, monasteries, convents and religious houses, but also the individual persons through whom — as the disciples at Emmaus experienced — Christ is able to touch hearts and open them up to hope.

Dear young people, with a spirit of generous self-giving, recognize that you are directly involved in the new evangelization, which demands the involvement of all of us. Proclaim Christ, who "died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who for their sakes died and was raised up" (2 Cor 5:15).

7. You, dear young people of the United States who will be the hosts of the next World Youth Day, have been given the joy of welcoming as a gift of the Spirit this meeting with the many young men and women who will come to your country on pilgrimage from all over the world.

You are already making fervent spiritual and material preparations for this event, which involves each member of your ecclesial communities.

It is my earnest hope that this extraordinary event will bring you ever greater enthusiasm and fidelity in following Christ and in joyfully welcoming his message, the source of new life.

I therefore entrust all of you to the Blessed Virgin Mary, through whom we have been given the Author of Life, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Lord. With great affection I send all of you my blessing.

From the Vatican, on 15 August 1992, the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary