



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THOSE TAKING PART IN THE CELEBRATION
OF 100th APOSTOLIC JOURNEY**

Thursday, 12 June 2003

1. I thank you for coming here today to the Pope's house so as to experience again that special routine that develops during apostolic journeys. I am thinking of all those whom you represent in spirit, all those, in other words, who are now advanced on the paths of life or who have already been called to God's house - who, in almost 25 years, have been privileged witnesses of this unique exercise of the Petrine ministry. I greet Cardinal Roberto Tucci and thank him for his kind words to me, and above all for the help that in past years he has given me in the preparation and successful outcome of a considerable number of my 100 journeys. With him I thank his co-workers as well as his predecessors and those who have taken up this task. I greet the Cardinals and Prelates present, particularly those who have participated in my Apostolic Journeys. My cordial thoughts then go to all of you who are gathered here: to the Minister of Infrastructures and Transport of the Italian Republic, the President, the Administrator Delegate and the General Director of Alitalia, together with the representatives of the flight crews and ground personnel, the members of the Gendarmerie and of the Pontifical Swiss Guard with their Commandants, the Health Care personnel and their director, the directors of Vatican Radio, of *L'Osservatore Romano* and of the Vatican Television Centre, the journalists accredited to the Press Office of the Holy See and its Director.

2. The 100th journey which I have just completed gives me the opportunity to renew my heartfelt thanks to divine Providence who has granted me to accomplish this important pastoral project. Indeed, since the day when I was elected Bishop of Rome, 16 October 1978, Jesus' commandment: "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation" (Mk 16: 15) has resounded in the depths of my heart with special intensity and urgency. I felt it was my duty, therefore, to imitate the Apostle Peter who "went here and there among them all" (Acts 9: 32), to build up and to consolidate the Church's vitality in fidelity to the Word and in the service of truth; to "tell them all... that God loves them, that the Church loves them, that the Pope loves them and also wants to receive from them the encouragement and example of their goodness, their faith" (*Address at Fiumicino Airport prior to departure for Mexico*, 25 January 1979; *ORE*, 5 February 1979, p. 7). Furthermore, the Apostolic Journeys have highlighted a specific dimension of the ministry proper to the Successor of Peter, the "lasting and visible source and foundation of the unity both of faith and of communion" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 18).

3. On all these journeys I have truly felt like a pilgrim on a visit to that particular shrine which is the people of God. In this shrine I have been able to contemplate the Face of Christ, at times disfigured

on the cross and at others, shining with light as on Easter morning. I have been able to share directly in my Brother Bishops' problems and pastoral anxieties. The different categories of the faithful, whom I have always wanted to be close to, have enabled me to learn first-hand about the life of the Christian communities on the different continents and their expectations, difficulties, suffering and joys. I have never forgotten the young people, "the hope of the Church and of the Pope": in their joyful or preoccupied faces I have seen a generation ready to devote itself generously to following Christ and to building the civilization of love. The great, colorful assemblies of the people of God gathered for the celebration of the Eucharist are impressed on my mind and heart as the highlight of my visits and my most stirring memory. Deeply in tune with them, I repeated Peter's profession of faith: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt 16: 16). Moved by the conviction that "man is the primary and fundamental way for the Church" (*Redemptoris Hominis*, n. 14), I then wanted to meet the brethren of the other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, as well as the faithful of Judaism, Islam and the other religions, to reassert with conviction the concrete commitment of the Catholic Church to restore full unity among Christians, and her openness to dialogue and cooperation with everyone in order to build a better world. Before me now I see the countless meetings I have had and all those who took part in them: once again I would like to embrace them all, to tell them all of the love and prayers of the Pope, once again to invite them all to "open wide the doors to Christ"!4. Dear brothers and sisters who are gathered here, I would like to say "thank you" to you. Your work at various levels and in various capacities has enabled the Pope to go to meet the men and women of our time in the places where they live. And you have helped him in his ministry as an itinerant missionary, eager to proclaim the words of salvation to all with the deep conviction that God wants "all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (I Tm 2: 4). I thank in particular the Secretariat of State that supervises the arrangements of my journeys, the Office of Liturgical Celebrations, and to all who make my ministry possible with their discreet service. I also thank those who work in the media who faithfully broadcast these visits in the various parts of the world. I entrust to Almighty God all the seeds sown in the course of 100 Apostolic Visits, beginning with Puebla del los Angeles in Mexico up to Croatia, and I pray that with his grace they will reap a plentiful harvest for the good of the Church and of the world.