



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER PAUL VI TO THE PILGRIMS FROM UNITED STATES

Wednesday, 22 June 1977

Dear sons and daughters from the United States,

These are wonderful days for America! The canonization of Saint John Neumann—as we said in our Angelus talk last Sunday—is a “glory for the American people: a glory that is spiritual, religious, Christian and Catholic; it is a glory that is so very human”.

And our hope today is that this holy event will have a lasting impact on the history of the United States, that it will mark a reaffirmation among our Catholic people of the great values in John Neumann’s life. We pray that the Holy Spirit will stir up a real renewal in love: love for God and love for neighbor.

Today we greet all of you as the representatives of the Church in the United States: the different categories, the different races, all the different ethnic groups that make up the fabric of your nation and the one ecclesial family, the one communion of the Church, the one Body of Christ, the one People of God. With paternal affection we embrace you all in the love of the Savior.

In a special way we turn to our beloved sons in the priesthood, and, with the inspired expression of the Acts of the Apostles, we beg you “to concentrate on prayer and the ministry of the word” (*Act. 6, 4*). We value highly the collaboration of our deacons in reverent ministry and charitable service. We send our greetings back to all the religious in the United States, recalling the value of consecrated love and its power to transform the world. To the seminarians present here and to your brothers at home we offer our encouragement, asking you to be generous in self-giving. Make the word of God the treasure of your seminary days. It will be a source of dynamism for your lives. You can only communicate Jesus, if you remain in his love, if his word lives in you.

And, in particular, for the beloved Catholic laity we pray that Bishop Neumann's canonization will be a source of fresh vigor: new commitment to the grace of Baptism and Confirmation, renewed adherence to Christian principles of life, amid all the attractions of materialism and all the enticements of the wordly pleasures offered by today's world. In the words of Saint Paul, we earnestly exhort you: "Do not model yourselves on the behavior of the world around you" (*Rom.* 12, 2), rather, we beseech you to stand firm-closely united with your Bishops and with us-in the grace of Christ and in fidelity to his holy Cross. The words of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem still echo down the centuries: "The Catholic Church is proud of all Christ's actions, but her greatest boast is the Cross" (S. CYRILLI HIEROSOLYMITANI *Cat.*, 13).

We ask that families be strengthened in the great ideals of Christian living: faithful and generous love, mutual understanding, common prayer. Our encouragement goes likewise to the single people who through the effort and activities of their lives give witness to Christ, and to all groups of Christians dedicated to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus. Our special love is with the poor, the afflicted, the distressed.

Our challenge for the entire ecclesial community is to love God and to love one's neighbor. In this regard, Saint Augustine opens up for us great insights when he says: "You must always think on these two commandments, meditate on them, keep them in mind, act by them and carry them out." And he continues: "Loving God comes first as a commandment, but loving your neighbor comes first as an activity (*Dei dilectio prior est ordine praecipendi, proximi autem dilectio prior est ordine faciendi*)". He concludes by saying: "It is in loving your neighbor that you merit to see God" (S. AUGUSTINI *In Ioann. Tract.*, 17).

In the fulfilling of this great duty, John Neumann is our model and our help. And we ask him to intercede for America and for all its citizens. We pray that his example and the witness of his holy life will be a source of strength and joy for all of you in the years ahead. God bless America!

Ad altri gruppi di lingua inglese

Our greetings in the Lord go also to our sons and daughters from other English-speaking countries-especially to the groups from England, Ireland and Denmark. May all of you find inspiration at the tomb of the Apostle Peter, and renew here your faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and chief Shepherd of the Church. In his name we bless you all!