

Series: Youth - 2

by the Pontifical Council for the Laity

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE LAITY

15th World Youth Day Youth Jubilee

“The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14)

Rome, 15-20 August 2000

7th International Youth Forum

“I say it to you all: let us walk in the footsteps of Christ!”

(JP II, Letter regarding pilgrimage to holy places, 29-6-1999)

Rome, 12-15 August 2000



VATICAN CITY
2001

PREFACE

During the course of its preparation, many referred to World Youth Day as the “heart” of the Great Jubilee. This definition and expectation then became reality, and the abundance of grace that blessed this event was evident to the eyes of all. However, we cannot forget one basic fact: looking back, we can see how the path to World Youth Day 2000 began fifteen years ago.

It actually started in 1985 with Pope John Paul II. He recognised that the strength and hope of the Church lay with the youth, so he dedicated the Apostolic Letter *Parati semper* to them and he called them to Rome to celebrate International Youth Year: “On you depends the future, on you depends also the end of this millennium and the beginning of the next. So do not be passive; take up your responsibilities – in all the fields open to you in our world!” (31 March 1985). The huge response was truly impressive, so much so that the Pope, at the end of that same year, made one of the most prophetic choices of his pontificate and decided to encourage the enthusiasm and commitment of young people by instituting a special Day for them.

So it was in 1985 that young people started on the long pilgrimage of faith, passing on the baton to the next generation, answering the call of Pope John Paul II to embark on what can be defined as “the journey of World Youth Days”. It is a journey towards a very precise goal, and the youth themselves seem to remind the Holy Father of this with their “massive participation full of availability and enthusiasm”. “They ask us to lead them to Christ, the only One who has words of eternal life (cf. *Jn* 6,68). [...] With their enthusiasm and their exuberant energy, young people ask to be encouraged to become ‘leading characters in evangelization and participants in the renewal of society’ (*Cristifideles*

laici, 46). In this way young people, in whom the Church recognises her own youthfulness as the Bride of Christ (cf. *Eph* 5,22-33), are not only evangelized, they also become evangelizers who carry the Gospel to their peers, even to those who do not know the Church and have not yet heard the Good News” (*Message for the Seminar on World Youth Days, 8 May 1996*).

When choosing the themes for World Youth Days that are outlined in his *Messages to the youth of the world*, Pope John Paul II follows a continuous thread: he reminds them of how the period of youth is one of particular vigour and uniqueness, he urges them to deepen and confirm their faith in Christ, and to carry it into the new millennium. In the message for the 9th WYD in 1996, the Pope states it very clearly: “We are henceforth on our way towards the Great Jubilee of the year 2000 [...] I entrust to you a plan of action. Based on the words of the Gospel and corresponding to the subjects proposed for each year to the whole Church, it will be the guideline for the next World Youth Days [...] To you, young people, I address in particular the call to look towards the epochal frontier of the year 2000, remembering that ‘the future of the world and the Church belongs to the younger generation, to those who, born in this century, will reach maturity in the next, the first century of the new millennium... If they succeed in following the road which Christ points out to them, they will have the joy of making their own contribution to his presence in the next century’ (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 58)”.

The World Youth Days have thus accompanied the younger generations throughout the continents and down through the years leading them to their appointment with the two thousandth anniversary of the incarnation of Christ at the very heart of the Great Jubilee. The fact that many of the participants in 2000 could possibly be children of those of 1985, makes this continuity even more significant. Two million four hundred thousand young men and women felt they could not miss the decisive appointment at Tor Vergata where they could gather around

that Pastor who believes in them so much. Each of those young people came with their own individual store of spiritual experience, life experience, culture and tradition, and, in contrast to the labels often attached by the mass media, they proclaimed to the world that one can both live in Jesus Christ and be young, one can be part of the masses in many different ways, and can gather and be united with others as Church.

The Pope is there beside those young people. Around them there are hundreds of bishops and thousands of priests. This explains the sensational response of the mass media. This explains the emotion felt by all present and by those made present through the television screen. The whole Church was represented there in Tor Vergata – a mostly young Church. In an event with a notable mood of celebration and one that was heavily symbolic, the Church manifested its vitality and vigour to the world. It is ever new, and always based on the central tenet of its faith: the living presence of the Word made flesh, Saviour of the world. The Church kept the appointment it made fifteen years ago, and it is intent on continuing along this road. Proclaiming that “Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever” is a mission that allows for no pause or interruption.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Francis Card. Stafford". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

JAMES FRANCIS Card. STAFFORD
President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity

**MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER
TO THE YOUTH OF THE WORLD ON THE OCCASION
OF THE 15TH WORLD YOUTH DAY**

“The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14)

My dear young people

1. Fifteen years ago, at the close of the Holy Year of the Redemption, I entrusted to you a great wooden Cross, asking you to carry it across the world as a sign of the love which the Lord Jesus has for mankind and to proclaim to everyone that only in Christ who died and is risen is there salvation and redemption. Since that day, carried by generous hands and hearts, the Cross has made a long, uninterrupted pilgrimage across the continents, to demonstrate that the Cross walks with young people and young people walk with the Cross.

Around the “Holy Year Cross”, World Youth Days were born and developed as meaningful “moments of rest” along your journey as young Christians; a constant, pressing invitation to build life on the rock that is Christ. How can we fail to bless the Lord for the countless fruits born in the hearts of individuals and in the whole Church thanks to the World Youth Days, which in this last part of the century have marked the journey of young believers towards the new millennium?

After spanning the continents, that Cross now returns to Rome bringing with it the prayers and commitment of millions of young people who have recognized it as a simple and sacred sign of God’s love for humanity. Because Rome, as you know, will host World Youth Day of the Year 2000, in the heart of the Great Jubilee.

Dear young people, I invite you therefore to undertake with joy the pilgrimage to Rome for this important ecclesial appointment, which will

rightly be the “Youth Jubilee”. Prepare to enter the Holy Door, knowing that to pass through it is to strengthen faith in Him in order to live the new life which he has given to us (cf. *Incarnationis Mysterium* 8).

2. I chose as the theme for your 15th World Day the lapidary phrase with which Saint John the Apostle describes the profound mystery of God made man: “*The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us*” (Jn 1:14). What distinguishes the Christian faith from all other religions, is the certainty that the man Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, the Word made flesh, the second person of the Trinity who came into the world. “Such is the joyous conviction of the Church from her beginning, whenever she sings ‘the mystery of our religion’: ‘He was manifested in the flesh’” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 463). God, the invisible one is alive and present in the person of Jesus, Son of Mary, the *Theotokos*, Mother of God. Jesus of Nazareth is God with us, Emmanuel: he who knows Him knows God, he who sees Him sees God, he who follows Him follows God, he who unites himself with Him is united with God (cf. Jn 12:44-50). In Jesus, born in Bethlehem, God embraces the human condition, making himself accessible, establishing a covenant with mankind.

On the eve of the new millennium, I make again to you my pressing appeal to open wide the doors to Christ who “to those who received him, gave power to become children of God” (Jn 1:12) To receive Jesus Christ means to accept from the Father the command to live, loving Him and our brothers and sisters, showing solidarity to everyone, without distinction; it means believing that in the history of humanity even though it is marked by evil and suffering, the final word belongs to life and to love, because God came to dwell among us, so we may dwell in Him.

By his incarnation Christ became poor to enrich us with his poverty, and he gave us redemption, which is the fruit above all of the blood he shed on the Cross (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 517). On Cal-

vary, “ours were the sufferings he bore ... he was pierced through for our faults” (*Is* 53: 4-5). The supreme sacrifice of his life, freely given for our salvation, is the proof of God’s infinite love for us. Saint John the Apostle writes: “God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son so that everyone that believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life” (*Jn* 3:16). He sent Him to share in every way, except sin, our human condition; he “gave” him totally to men, despite their obstinate and homicidal rejection (cf. *Mt* 21:33-39), to obtain, through his death, their reconciliation. “The God of creation is revealed as the God of redemption, as the God who is ‘faithful to himself’ and faithful to his love for man and the world which he revealed on the day of creation... how precious must man be in the eyes of the Creator, if he gained so great a Redeemer” (*Redemptor hominis* 9.10).

Jesus went towards his death. He did not draw back from any of the consequences of his being “with us”, *Emmanuel*. He took our place, ransoming us on the Cross from evil and sin (cf. *Evangelium vitae* 50). Just as the Roman Centurion, seeing the manner in which Jesus died, understood that he was the Son of God (cf. *Mk* 15:39) so we too, seeing and contemplating the Crucified Lord, understand who God really is, as he reveals in Jesus the depth of his love for mankind (cf. *Redemptor hominis* 9). “Passion” means a passionate love, unconditioned self-giving: Christ’s passion is the summit of an entire life “given” to his brothers and sisters to reveal the heart of the Father. The Cross, which seems to rise up from the earth, in actual fact reaches down from heaven, enfolding the universe in a divine embrace. The Cross reveals itself to be “the centre, meaning and goal of all history and of every human life” (*Evangelium vitae* 50).

“One man has died for all” (*2 Cor* 5:14): Christ “gave himself up in our place as a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God” (*Eph* 5:2). Behind the death of Jesus there is a plan of love, which the faith of the Church calls the “mystery of the redemption”: the whole of humanity is redeemed, that is, set free from the slavery of sin and led into the king-

dom of God. Christ is Lord of heaven and earth. Whoever listens to his word and believes in the Father, who sent him, has eternal life (cf. *Jn* 5:25). He is the “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (*Jn* 1:29.36), the high priest who, having suffered like us, is able to share our infirmity (cf. *Heb* 4:14) and “made perfect” through the painful experience of the Cross, becomes “for all who obey him, the source of eternal salvation” (*Heb* 5:9).

3. Dear young people, faced with these great mysteries, learn to lift your hearts in an attitude of contemplation. Stop and look with wonder at the infant Mary brought into the world, wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger: the infant is God himself who has come among us. Look at Jesus of Nazareth, received by some and scorned by others, despised and rejected: He is the Saviour of all. Adore Christ, our Redeemer, who ransoms us and frees us from sin and death: He is the living God, the source of Life.

Contemplate and reflect! God created us to share in his very own life; he calls us to be his children, living members of the mystical Body of Christ, luminous temple of the Spirit of Love. He calls us to be his: he wants us all to be saints. Dear young people, may it be your holy ambition to be holy, as He is holy.

You will ask me: but is it possible today to be saints? If we had to rely only on human strength, the undertaking would be truly impossible. You are well aware, in fact, of your successes and your failures; you are aware of the heavy burdens weighing on man, the many dangers which threaten him and the consequences caused by his sins. At times we may be gripped by discouragement and even come to think that it is impossible to change anything either in the world or in ourselves.

Although the journey is difficult, we can do everything in the One who is our Redeemer. Turn then to no one, except Jesus. Do not look elsewhere for that which only He can give you, because “of all the names in the world given to men this is the only one by which we can be

saved” (*Acts* 4:12). With Christ, saintliness – the divine plan for every baptized person – becomes possible. Rely on Him; believe in the invincible power of the Gospel and place faith as the foundation of your hope. Jesus walks with you, he renews your heart and strengthens you with the vigour of his Spirit.

Young people of every continent, do not be afraid to be the saints of the new millennium! Be contemplative, love prayer; be coherent with your faith and generous in the service of your brothers and sisters, be active members of the Church and builders of peace. To succeed in this demanding project of life, continue to listen to His Word, draw strength from the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Penance. The Lord wants you to be intrepid apostles of his Gospel and builders of a new humanity. In fact, how could you say you believe in God made man without taking a firm position against all that destroys the human person and the family? If you believe that Christ has revealed the Father’s love for every person, you cannot fail to strive to contribute to the building of a new world, founded on the power of love and forgiveness, on the struggle against injustice and all physical, moral and spiritual distress, on the orientation of politics, economy, culture and technology to the service of man and his integral development.

4. I sincerely wish that the Jubilee, now at the door, may be an opportune time for courageous spiritual renewal and an exceptional celebration of God’s love for humanity. From the whole Church may there rise up “a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to the Father, who in his incomparable love granted us in Christ to be ‘fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God’” (*Incarnationis Mysterium* 6). May we draw comfort from the certainty expressed by Saint Paul the Apostle: If God did not spare his only Son but gave him for us, how can he fail to give us everything with him? Who can separate us from the love of Christ? In every event of life, including death, we can be more than winners, by virtue of the One who loved us to the Cross (cf. *Rom* 8:31-37).

The mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God and that of the Redemption he worked for all men, constitute the central message of our faith. The Church proclaims this down through the centuries, walking “amidst the misunderstandings and persecutions of the world and the consolations of God” (S. AUGUSTINE, *De Civ. Dei* 18, 51, 2; PL 41,614) and she entrusts it to her children as a precious treasure to be safeguarded and shared.

You too, dear young people, are the receivers and the trustees of this heritage: “This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. And we are proud to profess it, in Jesus Christ Our Lord” (*Roman Pontifical, Rite of Confirmation*). We will proclaim it together on the occasion of the next World Youth Day, in which I hope very many of you will take part. Rome is a “city-shrine” where the memory of the Apostles Peter and Paul and other martyrs remind pilgrims of the vocation of every baptized person. Before the world, in August next year, we will repeat the profession of faith made by Saint Peter the Apostle: “Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (*Jn* 6:68) because “you are the Christ the Son of the Living God!” (*Mt* 16:16).

Also to you boys and girls who will be adults in the next century, is entrusted the “Book of Life”, which on Christmas Eve this year the Pope, the first to cross the threshold of the Holy Door, will show to the Church and to the world as the wellspring of life and hope for the third millennium (*Incarnationis Mysterium* 8).

May it become your most precious treasure: in the careful study and generous acceptance of the Word of the Lord, you will find nourishment and strength for your daily life, you will find motivation for tireless commitment to the building of a *civilization of love*.

5. Let us now turn our eyes to the Virgin Mother of God, of whom the city of Rome treasures one of the earliest and most honoured monuments which the devotion of the Christian people has dedicated to her: the Basilica of Saint Mary Major.

The Incarnation of the Word and the Redemption of mankind are closely linked with the Annunciation when God revealed to Mary his plan and found in her, a young person like yourselves, a heart totally open to the action of his love. For centuries Christian devotion has recalled every day, with the recitation of the *Angelus Domini*, God's entrance into the history of man. May this prayer become your daily meditated prayer.

Mary is the dawn which precedes the rising of the Sun of justice, Christ our Redeemer. With her "yes" at the Annunciation, as she opened herself completely to Father's plan, she welcomed and made possible the incarnation of the Son. The first disciple, with her discreet presence she accompanied Jesus all the way to Calvary and sustained the hope of the Apostles as they waited for the Resurrection and Pentecost. In the life of the Church she continues to be mystically the one who precedes the Lord's coming. To Mary, who fulfills without interruption her ministry as Mother of the Church and of each Christian, I entrust with confidence the preparation of the 15th World Youth Day. May Most Holy Mary teach you, dear young people, how to discern the will of the heavenly Father in your life. May she obtain for you the strength and the wisdom to speak to God and to speak about God. Through her example may she encourage you to be in the new millennium announcers of hope, love and peace.

Looking forward to meeting many of you in Rome next year, "I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace that has power to build you up and to give you your inheritance among all the sanctified" (*Acts 20:32*), while, gladly and with great affection, I bless all of you, with your families and your loved ones.

Joannes Paulus II

From the Vatican, June 29th 1999, solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul

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15TH WORLD YOUTH DAY YOUTH JUBILEE

“The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14)

Rome, 15-20 August 2000

1. OPENING CEREMONY WITH THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF ITALY

Saint John Lateran – 15 August 2000

The young people from Rome, Luca Ansini and Simona Montanini, greet the Holy Father on behalf of all present

The Successor of Peter gives us the word of life as a lamp for our steps

Holy Father, on behalf of all the young people from Rome and from all over Italy who are here present, I wish to extend a very warm welcome to you here with us in front of your cathedral!

We welcome you as the successor of the Apostle Peter, the Bishop of this city of Rome.

With joy and trepidation, Holy Father, we share with you this very significant moment in our lives as history enters its third millennium.

15 years have passed since 1985 when, here in Rome, you called the young people of the world to come together for the first time. Since then, the way has been fruitful for all those who accepted your invitation to throw open the doors to Christ without fear.

Three years ago, you invited your diocese to welcome young people in the Jubilee year of the Incarnation. The Holy Door that you opened on Christmas night last, as well as being a sign of the mercy of the Lord, today also represents the embrace of your diocese that with great joy - together with the 12 neighbouring dioceses - has thrown open the doors of its houses and of its churches, of places of work and places of study, to welcome our brothers and sisters who have come to Rome from all over the world. Just before this, many of them were guests of

1. Opening Ceremony with the young people of Italy

the various dioceses of Italy, where they have had the opportunity to witness the lives of faith of young Italians and the generous hospitality of our country.

This date was fixed three years ago when we began the countdown of years, months and days of preparation and waiting. Much work was done, and the spiritual preparation always sustained us in the practical organisation. The pilgrimage of the cross throughout the dioceses of Italy and the parishes of Rome, gathered us around the great sign of love that is given to us without reserve. While preparing for this event together, close friendships were made between people who had never met before and who came from very different life experiences. Today we can say that the young Christians of Italy and Rome know each other better. They have learned to get on together and to debate, and to move ahead together. We can say that World Youth Day has been a great gift to us, even before it started.

Today the big moment has arrived. We have the honour of celebrating, here with you in Rome, the millennium Jubilee.

The Christian history of our city, a history built on the intrepid witness of so many Saints and Martyrs, who did not hesitate to follow the example of the Lord even to giving the ultimate gift of their lives. This encourages us to make holiness our aim and our commitment: we can do it. We want to do it!

We ask you, as our Pastor, to confirm us in our faith. As we enter the third millennium, we listen once more to the Successor of Peter give us the word of life as a lamp for our steps for a future that has already begun.

Cardinal Camillo Ruini, Vicar General of His Holiness for the Diocese of Rome, thanks the Holy Father

The path followed by World Youth Day has led back to Rome

Holy Father,

The joy, emotion and gratitude of the young people of Rome and Italy in meeting you here at the start of the 15th World Youth Day, are also my joy, emotion and gratitude.

The memory immediately springs to mind of that afternoon of 30 March 1985, “International Youth Year”, in which, here in Saint John Lateran Square, your Holiness first met with young people coming from all over the world. It was then that you initiated that extraordinary journey of faith, friendship, fellowship, and collective joy and commitment that became World Youth Day.

Today, Holy Father, that journey that started in Rome and was conceived in the mind and heart of your Holiness, has returned to Rome in the year of the Great Jubilee. The Church in Rome and in all the dioceses of Italy, are fully involved and firmly committed to this common enterprise. They thank your Holiness for choosing Rome to hold this special World Youth Day.

The Incarnation of the Son of God has brought plentiful fruits of redemption and salvation to Rome through the historical continuity of the See of Peter and the community of believers, for the benefit not only of Rome, but for all humanity. Here in Rome, Holy Father, which is closely associated with you and is part of your mission in a very special way, the young people of Rome, Italy and the world, ask the Lord that this World Youth Day might be a gift of grace, light and strength so that they will be sincere and courageous witnesses of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the world of today and of the future.

We thank you again, Holy Father. Please guide us, bless us, and welcome us all with your open heart.

THE HOLY FATHER'S ADDRESS

To serve Christ is freedom!

1. *O Roma felix!* "O happy Rome!"

With this exclamation, down the centuries countless throngs of pilgrims before you, dear young people who are gathered for the 15th World Youth Day, travelled to the city of Rome to kneel at the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul.

"O happy Rome!". Happy because it was consecrated by the witness and blood of the Apostles Peter and Paul who still today, like two "verdant olive trees" and two "lamps lit", together with all the other saints and martyrs, show us the One whom we are here to celebrate: the Word who "became flesh and dwelt among us" (*Jn* 1:14), Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the living testimony of the Father's eternal love for us.

"O happy Rome!", happy too because today this testimony which you preserve is alive and is offered to the world, in particular to the world of the young generations!

2. I greet you all affectionately, young people who belong to the Diocese of Rome and to the Church in Italy. I greet Cardinal Camillo Ruini, Vicar of Rome and President of the Italian Episcopal Conference, and I am grateful to him for the words he addressed to me. I also thank the two young Romans who greeted me on your behalf.

I am pleased to see so many of you and I congratulate all those who have helped young people from other countries to take part in this special meeting. I know how much the young people of the various Italian Dioceses have done to prepare for this moment of an "exchange of happiness". In this city, which preserves the tombs and memorials of those who witnessed to the Saviour of the world, may every young person meet Jesus, the One who knows the secret of true happiness and promised it to his

friends with these words: “ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full ” (Jn 15:11).

Dear friends, at this moment, so longed-for and so significant, I naturally think back to the First World Youth meeting which took place precisely here, in front of the cathedral of Rome. Today we are setting out from here to have a new experience at a global level: *it is the meeting which opens a new century and a new millennium*. My hope is that it will allow the hearts of all to encounter the eternally living Christ.

3. Young people, children of the Church whose Bishop is the Successor of Peter and who, as St Ignatius of Antioch said, is called to “ preside in charity ” (*Ad Romanos*, Introd.), may you be committed for the next few days to welcoming the other young people who have gathered here from all the regions of the world. *Form heartfelt friendships with them*. Make their stay here in Rome enjoyable. Outdo each other in a spirit of service and friendly welcome in the style of Jesus’ friends – Lazarus, Martha and Mary – who often gave him hospitality at their house. Together with the young people from the 12 Dioceses close to Rome, open the doors of your homes to the pilgrims of this World Youth Day, becoming a hospitable city, a friendly home. In this way, there will be a meeting today between friends: between all of us and our great Friend, Jesus!

4. Live this World Day intensely, dear young pilgrims of the third millennium. Through your contact with your many peers who, like you, want to follow Christ, *treasure the words that the Bishops will say to you*, accepting the Lord’s voice to strengthen your faith and to witness to it without fear, knowing you are heirs of a great past.

In opening your Jubilee, dear young people, I would like to repeat the words with which I began my ministry as Bishop of Rome and Pastor of the universal Church; I would like these words to guide you during the time you spend in Rome: “ Do not be afraid! Open, indeed, open wide the doors to Christ! ”. Open your hearts, your lives, your

1. *Opening Ceremony with the young people of Italy*

doubts, your difficulties, your joys and your affections to his saving power, and let him enter your hearts. “Do not be afraid! Christ knows what is in a person. He alone knows it”. I said this on 22 October 1978. I repeat it with the same conviction, with the same force today, seeing the hope of the Church and of the world shining in your eyes. *Yes, let Christ govern your young lives; serve him with love. To serve Christ is freedom!*

5. We are opening these days of celebration under the gaze of Mary Most Holy, whom we contemplate today assumed into heaven: may the example of the young Virgin of Nazareth help you to say “yes” to the Lord who is knocking at your door and wants to enter and make his dwelling within you.

Responding to the young people’s cry, “Long live the Pope!”, the Holy Father said extemporaneously:

He is alive, the Pope has been alive for 80 years and the young people want him young for ever. How can I do it? Thank you for your catechesis. I hope that you are enjoying your stay in Rome, that you feel ever close to the *Salus Populi Romani* and feel her motherly closeness.

With this wish I must leave you, because I have to go to St Peter’s to welcome, in your name too, all those who have come to Rome from every part of the world to celebrate and live the Youth Jubilee with you.

2. WELCOMING CEREMONY WITH YOUNG PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD

Saint Peter's Square – 15 August 2000

Cardinal James Francis Stafford, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, addresses the Holy Father

These young people are the generation of the Second Vatican Council

Holy Father! These young people come as pilgrims from 157 nations. The singular dome with its celestial *tempietto* floats near their national flags in St. Peter's Square. Some have spent 50 hours in pullmans to be here. Others put even more time coming on planes, boats, trains, bicycles, and on foot. They all have come to the Eternal City at your invitation. They wish to be with you, their Holy Father and the successor of St. Peter, and to hear you proclaim afresh to them: "Dear young people! Do not be afraid! Jesus is risen! We are one body in Christ! "

Not too long ago, it was an ominous portent when thousands of young people moved across national borders. Citizens trembled in fear. They closed and barricaded their doors. For those hosts of young men were armies of war, instruments of destruction, plague and darkness.

At your initiative, Holy Father, these young men and women of Europe and of the world have formed a different kind of army. The beautiful cities and towns of Italy have sung songs of welcome to them. The people of this Apostolic See of Peter thank God for them and know the courage of the first Christians of this City upon seeing Paul. Before the open threshold of the Holy Door, these hundreds of thousands are pilgrims of light.

2. Welcoming Ceremony with young people from all over the world

Their weapons differ from those of centuries past. They stand before you, Holy Father, “ [having taken] the whole armor of God... [and] having gird [their] loins with truth, and having put on the breast-plate of righteousness, and having shod [their] feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace ” (*Eph* 6:13-16).

We ask your prayers, Holy Father, that your dear young people will emerge from this Jubilee pilgrimage with their baptismal innocence renewed. That innocence is not complicated. St. Paul describes it with simplicity, “ [Christians are] always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in [their] bodies. For while [they] live [they] are always being given up to death for Jesus’s sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in [their] mortal flesh ” (2 *Cor* 4:10-11).

Holy Father, you have seen clearly that these young people are the generation of the Second Vatican Council. They are “ on pilgrimage from the Lord ” (LG 6). They reflect the beauty envisioned by you and the Fathers of the Council. That beauty, still incomplete but ever orientated towards fulness, is found in the weaving of the various paradoxes of freedom and obedience, of faith and culture, of *eros* – a passionate joy of living – and asceticism.

Holy Father, as you walked in the 1960’s to the Council sessions to express again the mystery of the always youthful Church, you experienced the embrace of these great colonnades many times. Today we all pray that your happiness may be full. For these youthful multitudes, now embraced by the arms of St. Peter also, are living witnesses to the Council’s hope and to yours.

Two young people greet the Holy Father on behalf of the youth from all over the world

We have grown up with you

Holy Father,

On behalf of the young people here present who have come from each of the continents, I wish to thank you for having invited us to have our Jubilee here with you in Rome. In 1985, you initiated the practice of World Youth Day. For us it is a time of true fellowship, prayer and hope. Thank you for providing us with this time of grace and instruction in the Christian life.

All of us young people here this evening have grown up with you. In fact, a large number of us have the same age as your pontificate! Thank you for having led us by the hand towards the new millennium and for your love and patience in showing us the way of Christ. With you, dear Holy Father, we wish to show the world that we want to build a civilisation of love based on respect, acceptance and self-giving, but above all and first of all, on Christ our only Saviour and Master. We thank you for your trust in us as you call on us to transmit the Gospel in the new millennium.

During this World Youth Day, we are celebrating together the gift of faith in Jesus Christ. We know that he receives us as he received the young man who asked him the question: "What must I do to gain eternal life?" (*Mt 19:16*). Each of us personally, each one in the whole Church, wants to follow the road of sanctity.

Holy Father, once again we entrust ourselves to you and to your prayer. We know that you love us. We too love you.

Thank you for your invitation. Thank you for your presence. May God protect you!

André Ouendeno, Republic of Guinea

These differences can become treasures

We love you, Holy Father!
Dearest Pope John Paul II,

We wish to express our gratitude to you for having invited us to come to Rome, the city that bears the trace of so many saints and martyrs, where so many generations of Christians have lived their faith since the beginning of the Church. Thank you for having gathered us here around you, in your home, to give us once again the mission to carry God's message to the world and especially to our fellow young people. Thank you because it means you trust us and love us.

In being here we can realize that over the boundaries of countries and races, of languages and expressions of faith, we are one family in true and deep communion, through God's love and unity. These differences can become treasures because we have something in common that is stronger than all else, our faith in Jesus Christ, the only Son of God.

We hope to be encouraged and strengthened in our faith from hearing and sharing the experiences of so many others who try to discover the presence of the Lord and follow him in situations that are extremely diverse. Holy Father, help us see that we should not fear, even when confronted with the difficulties and challenges the youth face today, because Jesus is with us at every moment and never abandons us. Help us find in this the courage to live out our faith in our acts and deeds.

The new millennium is just starting. We are grateful to be given this opportunity, in Rome, to leave an imprint of our own, setting our youthful steps in Christ's footsteps.

Holy Father we love you so much!

Eun-Ha Hwang, Korea

THE HOLY FATHER'S GREETING TO THE YOUTH

To each of you I say: Peace be with you!

1. Dear young people of the Fifteenth World Youth Day, dear brother priests, men and women religious, and teachers who are here with you, welcome to Rome! I thank Cardinal James Francis Stafford for his warm words of presentation. With him I greet Cardinal Camillo Ruini, and the other Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops present. I also thank the two young people who so well expressed the feelings of all of you, gathered here from so many parts of the world.

After stopping at the Basilica of Saint John Lateran, the Cathedral of Rome, to greet the young people of Rome and Italy, I welcome all of you with joy. The Roman and Italian young people join me in offering you a most fraternal and heartfelt welcome.

Your faces bring to mind, and in a way make present here, all the young people that it has been my privilege to meet on my apostolic journeys throughout the world during the last few years of the millennium. To each of you I say: Peace be with you!

The Pope calls the 160 countries represented in St Peter's Square

Peace be with you, young people who have come from Africa [...]

Peace be with you, young people who have come from the Americas [...]

Peace be with you, young people who have come from Asia [...]

Peace be with you, young people who have come from Europe [...]

Peace be with you, young people who have come from Oceania [...].

With special affection I greet the group of young people from countries where hatred, violence and war bring suffering to the life of entire populations. Thanks to the solidarity shown by all the youth here present, they have been able to come here this evening. To them I say, in your name as well, that in our gathering we are close to them as brothers

2. *Welcoming Ceremony with young people from all over the world*

and sisters; with all of you, I ask for them and for their people a time of peace in justice and freedom.

I also wish to address the young people of other Churches and Ecclesial Communities who are here this evening with some of their Pastors: may World Youth Day be a new opportunity for us to get to know each other and to implore the Holy Spirit together for the gift of perfect unity of all Christians!

Dear friends from the five Continents, I am happy to inaugurate the *Youth Jubilee* with you this evening. May you, pilgrims in the footsteps of the Apostles, imitate their faith.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever!

THE HOLY FATHER'S ADDRESS TO THE YOUTH

**God is at work in the concrete and personal situations
of each one of us**

1. Dear friends who have travelled so many miles in so many ways to come to Rome, to the Tombs of the Apostles, let me begin by putting this question to you: what have you come here to find? You have come to celebrate your Jubilee: the Jubilee of the young Church. Yours is not just any journey: if you have set out on pilgrimage it is not just for the sake of recreation or an interest in culture. Well then, let me ask again: what have you come in search of? Or rather, who have you come here to find?

There can be only one answer to that: you have come in search of Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ, however, has already come in search of you. Celebrating the Jubilee can have no other meaning than that of celebrating and meeting Jesus Christ, the Word who became flesh and came to dwell among us.

The Prologue of Saint John's Gospel, which has just now been proclaimed, could be described as Jesus' "visiting card". It invites us to fix our eyes on the mystery of Jesus. These words hold a special message for you, dear young people: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God" (*Jn* 1:1-2).

Indicating to us the Word who is one in being with the Father, the eternal Word generated as God from God and light from light, the Evangelist takes us to the heart of the divine life, but also to the well-spring of the world. This Word in fact is the beginning of all creation: "all things were made through him, and without him was not made anything that was made" (*Jn* 1:3). The whole created world, before ever it came to be, was in the mind of God and was willed by him in an eternal plan of love. Therefore, if we look at the world in depth, allowing our-

2. *Welcoming Ceremony with young people from all over the world*

selves to marvel at the wisdom and beauty which God has poured out upon it, we can see in it a reflection of the Word, which biblical revelation unveils for us fully in the face of Jesus of Nazareth. In a sense, creation is the first “revelation” of Him.

2. The Prologue continues with these words: “In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness did not accept it” (*Jn* 1:4-5). For the Evangelist, the light is life, and death, the enemy of life, is darkness. Through the Word, all life appeared on the earth, and in the Word this life has its perfect fulfillment.

Identifying light and life, John is thinking of the life that is not just the biological life of the body but the life which comes from sharing in the very life of Christ. The Evangelist says: “The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world” (*Jn* 1:9). This enlightenment was given to humanity on that night in Bethlehem, when the eternal Word of the Father took on a human body from the Virgin Mary, became man and was born into the world. From that time onwards, every person who by faith shares in the mystery of that event experiences some measure of that enlightenment.

Christ himself, announcing that he was the light of the world, said one day: “While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become children of light” (*Jn* 12:36). This is an exhortation which the followers of Christ pass on to one another from generation to generation and try to apply to their everyday lives. Saint Paul writes in reference to this exhortation: “Walk always as children of light, for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true” (*Eph* 5:8-9).

3. The heart of John’s Prologue is the proclamation that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (1:14). A little before this, the Evangelist had declared: “He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, he gave power to become

children of God” (cf. 1:10-12). Dear friends, are you among those who have accepted Christ? Your presence here is already an answer to that question. You have come to Rome in this Jubilee year of the two thousandth anniversary of Christ’s birth, in order to open your hearts to the power of life which is in him. You have come here to rediscover the truth about creation and to recover a sense of wonder at the beauty and richness of the created world. You have come to renew within yourselves an awareness of the dignity of humankind, created in the image and likeness of God.

“ We have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth ” (*Jn* 1:14). A contemporary philosopher has emphasized the significance of death in human life, to the point of describing the human person as “ a being made for death ”. The Gospel, on the contrary, makes it clear that the human person is a being made for life. Every person is called by God to share in the divine life. A person is a being called to glory.

These days which you will spend together in Rome at the World Youth Day, should help each of you to see more clearly the glory which belongs to the Son of God and to which we have been called in him by the Father. For this to happen, your faith in Christ must grow and be strengthened.

4. I wish to bear witness to this faith here before all of you, young friends, at the tomb of the Apostle Peter, whom the Lord wished me to succeed as Bishop of Rome. Beginning with myself, today I wish to tell you that I believe firmly in Jesus Christ our Lord. Yes, I believe, and I make my own the words of the Apostle Paul: “The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me ” (*Gal* 2:20).

I remember how, as a child in my family, I learned to pray and trust in God. I remember the environment in the parish that I attended in Wadowice, as well as the parish of Saint Stanislaus Kostka in Debniki in

2. *Welcoming Ceremony with young people from all over the world*

Kraków, where I received my basic training in Christian living. I will never forget the experience of war and the years of work in a factory. My priestly vocation came to its full maturity during the Second World War, during the occupation of Poland. The tragedy of the War gave a particular colouring to the gradual maturing of my vocation in life. In these circumstances, I perceived a light shining ever more brightly within me: the Lord wanted me to be a priest! I remember with emotion that moment in my life when, on the morning of 1 November 1946, I was ordained a priest.

My *Credo* continues in my present service to the Church. On 16 October 1978, after my election to the See of Peter, when I was asked “Do you accept?”, I answered “With obedience in faith to Christ, my Lord, and trusting in the Mother of Christ and of the Church, no matter what the difficulties, I accept” (*Redemptor Hominis*, 2). From that time on, I have tried to carry out my mission, drawing light and strength every day from the faith that binds me to Christ.

But my faith, like that of Peter and like the faith of each one of you, is not just my doing, my attachment to the truth of Christ and the Church. It is essentially and primarily the work of the Holy Spirit, a gift of his grace. The Lord gives his Spirit to me as he gives him to you, to help us say: “I believe”, and then to use us to bear witness to him in every corner of the world.

5. Dear friends, why do I want to offer you this personal testimony at the beginning of your Jubilee? I do so in order to make it clear that the journey of faith is part of everything that happens in our lives. God is at work in the concrete and personal situations of each one of us: through them, sometimes in truly mysterious ways, the Word “made flesh”, who came to live among us, makes himself present to us.

Dear young people, do not let the time that the Lord gives you go by as though everything happened by chance. Saint John has told us that everything has been made in Christ. Therefore, believe unshakeably

in him. He directs the history of individuals as well as the history of humanity. Certainly Christ respects our freedom, but in all the joyful or bitter circumstances of life he never stops asking us to believe in him, in his word, in the reality of the Church, in eternal life!

Don't ever think then that you are unknown to him, as if you were just a number in an anonymous crowd. Each one of you is precious to Christ, he knows you personally, he loves you tenderly, even when you are not aware of it.

6. Dear friends, who face the third millennium with all the ardour of your youth, give your full attention to the opportunity offered to you by World Youth Day in this Church of Rome, which today more than ever is your Church. Let yourselves be moulded by the Holy Spirit. Spend time in prayer, letting the Spirit speak to your hearts. To pray means to give some of your time to Christ, to entrust yourselves to him, to listen in silence to his word, to make it echo in your hearts.

Treat these days as though they were a great week of spiritual exercises; look for times of silence, prayer and recollection. Ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten your minds, ask him for the gift of a living faith which will forever give meaning to your lives, joining them to Christ, the Word made flesh.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, who gave birth to Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit, Mary *Salus Populi Romani* and Mother of all peoples, and Saints Peter and Paul, and all the other Saints and Martyrs of this Church and of all the Churches to which you belong, sustain you on your journey.

3. MASS FOR THE 7TH INTERNATIONAL YOUTH FORUM

Castelgandolfo – 17 August 2000

Pierluigi Vito, a young Italian, greets the Holy Father on behalf of all the delegates of the 7th International Youth Forum

The witness you give shows us the way to follow Christ

Holy Father,

The most important word that we all feel and we want to address to you is: Grazie! Thank you! Merci! Muchas gracias!

We could say it to you in so many other languages as we come from all parts of the world. Thank you for allowing us to be near you during the most important events of this World Youth Day.

Thank you for inviting us here today. The intensity of the Eucharist that we are about to share will certainly be the most moving source of grace that any of us could possibly receive.

Thank you for the witness you give us day after day to show us how to follow in the footsteps of Christ, right into the new millennium.

Thank you for the love that you, worthy successor of Peter, have shown to us young people on other occasions during the past number of years.

Pray for us, your Holiness, today and always.

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II

**Love Christ as he loves you.
Love the Church as Christ loves the Church**

1. “ Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you ” (*Jer 1:5*). The words God addressed to the prophet Jeremiah affect us personally. They remind us of God’s plan for each of us. He knows us individually because he has chosen and loved us from eternity, entrusting to each of us a specific vocation within the general plan of salvation. Dear young people of the International Forum, I am pleased to welcome you together with Cardinal James Francis Stafford, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, and his staff. I greet you affectionately.

Quite rightly, you feel personally challenged by the prophet’s words. Indeed, many of you already hold a position of responsibility in your local Church and many others will be called to assume one. Therefore, it is important that you bring the rich human, spiritual and ecclesial experience of this Forum away with you. You are sent out to proclaim to others the words of life you have received: these words will be efficacious and take root in you the more you share them with others.

Dear young people, do not doubt God’s love for you! He has reserved a place for you in his heart and a mission for you in the world. The first reaction can be fear or doubt. These are sentiments which Jeremiah felt before you: “ Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth ” (*Jer 1:6*). The task seems immense because it assumes the dimensions of society and the world. But do not forget that when the Lord calls, he also provides the necessary strength and grace to answer his call.

Do not be afraid to accept your responsibilities: the Church needs you, and it needs your commitment and generosity; the Pope needs you

and, at the beginning of this new millennium, he is asking you to take the Gospel out onto the streets of the world.

2. In the responsorial psalm, we heard a question which sounds particularly relevant in today's polluted world: "How can a young man keep his way pure?" (Ps 118:9). We also heard the simple and incisive reply: "By guarding it according to your word" (*ibid.*). So we need to ask to have a taste for the Word of God and for the joy to be able to witness to something that is greater than us: "In the way of your testimonies I delight..." (Ps 119:14).

Joy is also born of the knowledge that countless other people in the world accept, like us, the "Lord's commandments" and make them the substance of their lives. How rich is the Church's universality, her "catholicity"! What diversity according to the countries, rites, spirituality, associations, movements and communities! What beauty, and at the same time, what deep communion there is in the common values and shared affection for Jesus, the Lord!

While living and praying together, you have perceived that the diversity of your ways of receiving and expressing the faith neither alienates you from one another nor makes you rivals. It simply highlights the great richness of that unique and extraordinary gift of Revelation for which the world has so great a need.

3. In the Gospel we have just heard, the Risen Christ asks Peter the question that will determine his whole life: "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" (Jn 21:16). Jesus does not ask him to declare his talents, gifts and skills. Nor does he ask this person who has just denied him whether from now on he will be faithful to him and whether he will stand firm. He asks him the only thing that matters, the one thing that can give a vocation its foundation: do you love me?

Today, Christ is asking each of you the same question: do you love me? He is not asking you whether you know how to speak to crowds,

whether you can direct an organization or manage an estate. He is asking you to love him. All the rest will ensue. In fact, walking in Jesus' footsteps is not immediately expressed in things to do or say, but first of all in loving him, in staying with him, in totally accepting him into one's life.

Today, you are giving Jesus' question a sincere answer. Some will be able to say with Peter: "Lord; you know that I love you!" (*Jn* 21:16). Others will say: "Lord, you know how I would like to love you; teach me to love you, to be able to follow you". The important thing is to stay on the path, to continue the journey without losing sight of the goal, until the day when you will be able to say with all your heart: "You know that I love you!".

4. Dear young people, love Christ and love the Church! Love Christ as he loves you. Love the Church as Christ loves the Church.

Do not forget that true love sets no conditions; it does not count the cost or complain, but simply loves. How could you really take responsibility for an inheritance which you only partly accepted? How can one share in building up something that one does not love with all one's heart?

May communion in the Body and Blood of the Lord help each one grow in love for Jesus and for his Body, which is the Church.

4. A DELEGATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE MEET THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ITALY

Quirinale Palace – 19 August 2000

An Italian girl, Oronza Renna, addresses the President of the Republic of Italy on behalf of a delegation of 200 young participants in the 15th World Youth Day

**We want peace, not as a slogan to shout aloud,
but as a commitment**

Mister President,

We are grateful to you for inviting us here in representation of so many young people who have come to Rome from all the continents for the 15th World Youth Day.

Hundreds of thousands of young people – there will be over a million this evening! – from over 160 countries, have accepted the invitation of Pope John Paul II. For these few days, Rome, the see of Peter and capital of Italy, could be described as the “world capital of Youth”, to use Cardinal Camillo Ruini’s expression. In addressing you, we wish to convey our deepest gratitude to the national and local authorities who have welcomed us. They have worked with competence and understanding so that our stay could demonstrate the old saying that nobody is a stranger in Rome and Rome is not strange to anyone.

World Youth Day is a religious encounter, and this year it commemorates the twenty centuries that have passed since the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, “The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14). Guided by the Holy Father, we have been meditating with our

bishops and priests on this event that is of such significance for all of humankind throughout the ages, Christians and non-Christians alike. We have done this through catechesis, through the continuing jubilee pilgrimage at Saint Peter's, and through the Way of the Cross. It will conclude, today and tomorrow, in Tor Vergata, in the presence of the Holy Father. There we will renew our faith in Christ our Saviour and our commitment to be witnesses to him in the third millennium back in our own countries. We are honoured that you and Mrs Ciampi will be taking part in the Holy Mass presided by the Holy Father tomorrow morning at Tor Vergata.

The option to be disciples of Jesus is also an option for Christian humanism that has shaped the cultures of so many peoples and the highest values of civil society. We young people today are conscious of the resources the Lord has given us. The Gospel gives us critical awareness and constructive responsibility towards the enormous needs of the world today. The first to suffer these needs are often the young people themselves.

We wholeheartedly accept the task that Pope John Paul II entrusted to us in his Message for the 15th World Youth Day. Since Christ revealed the love of the Father for every creature, we intend to "strive to contribute to the building of a new world, founded on the power of love and forgiveness, on the struggle against injustice and all physical, moral and spiritual distress, on the orientation of politics, economy, culture and technology to the service of human beings and their integral development" (*Message*, 3). We wish to share this message with all the young people in the world, and through you, we would like to pass it on to all Italian youth who will not be with us in person but with whom we wish to share anticipation and hope.

We believe in peace, we want peace, but not as a slogan to shout aloud, but as a commitment, especially through respect for the life of every person, in particular, that of the weakest and the defenceless, from the moment of their conception until their natural death; through the

recognition of the rights of individuals and peoples, beginning with access to education and culture, and freedom of religion; through a specific attention to the vast world of poverty and through the construction of a more accurate and honest version of justice among people and within societies, which in this jubilee calls for the cancellation of foreign debt for the poorest countries; through confidence in the possibility of redemption for each person and thus denial of the death penalty; through the opportunity for dignified work for all and without exploitation of any kind, especially against children and minors; through the protection of all creation, which is God's gift to us and which it is our responsibility to hand on to future generations; through the surmounting of tensions between the various countries and ethnic groups. One small example of this pacific harmony is the presence among us of young people from countries presently in conflict with each other but who are here in a spirit of fellowship.

Mister President, we are aware of your enlightened and constant dedication to the values we have just mentioned, together with your regard for young people, how you like to talk to them and guide and encourage them. We thank you for this noteworthy attention and we assure you of our friendship and collaboration, beginning with the young Italians.

Finally, we wish to express our gratitude for the special welcome shown to us and for the effort on the part of the authorities to guarantee the success of this worldwide meeting that takes place in the city and country that have the privilege of being at the centre of the Catholic world and at the heart of the Great Jubilee of the year two thousand.

As a memento of our meeting, Mister President, please accept these two gifts. One is an ancient Roman coin dating from the time of the Roman Empire that came from Jerusalem. This brings us back to the time when Jesus lived on earth and walked our roads.

Furthermore, as you will be going on pilgrimage with us tomorrow morning to the place where we will conclude the Youth Jubilee together,

we would also like to give you the symbol of the pilgrims who came to Rome in times gone by: the intersecting keys, a symbol of the power of binding and loosening of sins given by the Lord to the Apostle Peter, placed below the Holy Face of the only One who can forgive: our Lord Jesus Christ.

Please accept them together with our high regard and our desire to do good. Thank you, Mister President.

Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, President of the Republic of Italy, addresses the young people

**Do not forget the spirit of love that unites you.
Allow it to inspire your whole lives**

Your Eminence,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear young people,

I give you my warmest welcome here to the Quirinale, the home of all Italians. [...]

Thank you, Miss Renna, for your address that expresses the feelings of all the young participants in this 15th World Youth Day. This event is unique because it takes place within the Jubilee, and it is unique by its very nature.

Thank you for your gifts. They are very meaningful.

There are many of you here in this room, but I know that you represent a huge multitude that have come to our city in response to the invitation of the Bishop of Rome, His Holiness Pope John Paul II, to celebrate and promote the values of fellowship among all people.

With your serene and open expressions, you bring with you a wave of hope and confidence in the future. The Italian people welcome you with joy and in a spirit of friendship.

You have “conquered” Rome with your enthusiasm, and with your festive yet dignified behaviour which is a sign of deep internal discipline. Rome is happy to have been “conquered” by you. As a result of this wonderful and unique event, Rome itself and all Italy will have reason to be confident and enthusiastic as they continue to work towards peace among the peoples.

The young lady who spoke on your behalf, spoke with words that spring from faith and a spirit of love that belong to the Christian tradition from which you draw so much spiritual strength. These words reflect the sentiments of people of goodwill from any religious tradition, provided that they share the same enthusiastic fellowship towards all peoples, far and near, and provided that they are united by the same dream of peace and the same spirit of love towards the weakest and less fortunate.

Italy is proud to be the first country to propose and put into action the cancellation of all debts, financial and commercial, of indebted nations, with the only condition that they respect human rights and do not wage war with their neighbours.

You with your youthful enthusiasm, challenge yourselves with difficult undertakings as we enter a new millennium. Humanity is emerging from a century of warfare, massacres and catastrophes, perhaps without precedence in the modern era.

During this century many empires have fallen. Many ideologies promoting evil and hatred have been overcome and abolished. Many peoples have gained independence and have begun to experience freedom. Many nations that have been enemies for centuries have made peace and are now together building supranational institutions of government that could, if we wish, assure us of “eternal peace” that prophets and philosophers have longed for as a common dream for all humankind.

It is not easy to read and interpret the signs of the times that we have lived through. There is no doubt that huge advances in science and technology have been made during the course of this century.

However, the same progress in knowledge that has allowed us to work for the good more than ever before, has also made us masters of means of destruction with unlimited power that could wipe out civilisation itself and all life on earth.

If we look towards the future, we can see humankind more than ever in control and in a position to choose our destiny, between peace or

war, life or death. It has been like that in the past, but they never had the possibility of doing so much good or so much bad to themselves. They never had to make the “protection of all creation” one of their goals, as it was expressed with conviction and force by your representative.

We know that, in the future as in the past, the choice is in our hands, or rather, dear young people, it is in your hands, in your hearts and in your conscience.

People of my generation have survived so much destruction and so many dangers, yet they are able to project and open new ways of relating among the peoples. They transmit to you a patrimony, improved and increased through their labours, and rich in values, knowledge and experience. It is up to you to make good use of it.

We have held our flags up high and fought for our faith in God and humankind. We have never given up hope. Now it is up to you to make strides in the building of a peaceful world, as the young lady who spoke on your behalf said, rightly claiming that “*we want peace, not as a slogan to shout aloud, but as a commitment*”. Let us remember those words. May they be our resolution every day of our lives.

Some of your colleagues, unfortunately, come from countries at war where there is often fierce civilian conflict motivated by racial or religious hatred. After this Jubilee that is celebrated by youth from all over the world in a spirit of fellowship and religious and moral commitment, they will return to their countries with even stronger determination to work towards peace and understanding between peoples and different ethnic and religious groups.

May occasions like this be an endless source of inspiration and learning. You young people who represent so many diverse peoples, you have been able to look into the eyes of each other and see brothers and sisters in faith, values and dreams.

When you part to return to your countries you will feel stronger as a result of this experience. You will have absorbed more of the message of

peace that the Roman Pontiff has been preaching throughout his tireless pilgrimages from one end of the earth to the other, and that he has repeated to you on this emotion-filled occasion with such force.

Do not forget the spirit of love that unites you. Allow it to inspire your whole lives. We trust you with this.

Meeting you gives me serenity and hope for the future. You have so many problems before you to deal with, so many dangers to ward off, but your hearts are full of hope, and you have so many good values and so much strength. These will lead you along the road of peace and fellowship.

I welcome you in a spirit of friendship, conscious that I represent a people from a very ancient civilisation. In their hearts, by nature and tradition, they keep an authentic and deep sense of humanity, of real respect for the rights of others, not only juridically but substantially. They are a people who, throughout centuries of adversity and challenges, defeats and triumphs, have built the very foundations for the construction of peace and fellowship that you and future generations will have to continue.

Welcome to Rome, the city we like to call *The eternal City*.

Welcome to Italy, a country that loves and wants peace. May your dreams, our dreams, come true. That is my most heart-felt wish.

5. PRAYER VIGIL WITH THE HOLY FATHER

Tor Vergata – 19 August 2000

THE POPE'S ADDRESS TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE

At the dawn of the Third Millennium I consider you as “morning watchmen”

1. “*But who do you say that I am?*” (Mt 16:15).

Dear young people, it is with great joy that I meet you again at this Prayer Vigil, during which we wish to listen together to Christ whom we feel present among us. It is he who is speaking to us.

“Who do you say that I am?” Jesus asks his disciples this question near Caesarea Philippi. Simon Peter answers: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt 16:16). The Master then turns to him with the surprising words: “Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven” (Mt 16:17).

What is the meaning of this dialogue? Why does Jesus want to know what people think about him? Why does he want to know what his disciples think about him?

Jesus wants his disciples *to become aware* of what is hidden in their own minds and hearts and to give voice to their conviction. At the same time, however, he knows that the judgment they will express *will not be theirs alone*, because it will reveal what God has poured into their hearts by the grace of faith.

This event which took place near Caesarea Philippi leads us, in a sense, into the “faith workshop”. There the mystery of the origin and

development of our faith is disclosed. First there is the grace of revelation: an intimate, ineffable self-giving of God to humanity. There then follows the call to respond. Finally there comes the human response, a response which from that point on must give meaning and shape to one's entire life.

This is what faith is all about! It is the response of the rational and free human person to the word of the living God. The questions that Jesus asks, the answers given by the Apostles, and finally by Simon Peter, are a kind of examination on the maturity of the faith of those who are closest to Christ.

2. The conversation near Caesarea Philippi took place during the time leading up to the Passover, that is before Christ's passion and resurrection. We should also recall another event, when the Risen Christ checked the maturity of faith of his Apostles. This is *the meeting with the Apostle Thomas*. He was the only one not there when, after the resurrection, Christ came for the first time into the Upper Room. When the other disciples told him that they had seen the Lord, he would not believe it. He said: "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe" (Jn 20:25). A week later, the disciples were gathered together again and Thomas was with them. Jesus came through the closed door, and greeted the Apostles with the words: "Peace be with you" (Jn 20:26), and immediately he turned to Thomas: "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing" (Jn 20:27). Thomas then answered: "My Lord and my God!" (Jn 20:28).

The event in the Upper Room was also a kind of "faith workshop" for the Apostles. However, in a sense, what happened to Thomas goes beyond what occurred near Caesarea Philippi. In the Upper Room we see a more radical dialectic of faith and unbelief, and, at the same time, *an even deeper confession of the truth about Christ.* It was certainly not

easy to believe that the One who had been placed in the tomb three days earlier was alive again.

The divine Master had often announced that he would rise from the dead, and in many ways he had shown that he was the Lord of life. Yet the experience of his death was so overwhelming that people needed to meet him directly in order to believe in his resurrection: the Apostles in the Upper Room, the disciples on the road to Emmaus, the holy women beside the tomb... Thomas too needed it. But when his unbelief was directly confronted by the presence of Christ, the doubting Apostle spoke the words which express the deepest core of faith: If this is the case, if you are truly living despite having been killed, this means that you are “my Lord and my God”.

The “faith workshop” is enriched with a new element in this episode with Thomas. Divine revelation, Jesus’s question and humanity’s response culminate in the disciple’s personal encounter with the living Christ, with the Risen One. This encounter is the beginning of a new relationship between each one of us and Christ, a relationship in which each of us comes to the vital realization that Christ is Lord and God; not only the Lord and God of the world and of humanity, but the Lord and God of my own individual human life. One day Saint Paul would write: “The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach. Because if you confess with your lips that *Jesus is Lord* and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (*Rom* 10:8-9).

3. The readings of today’s Liturgy describe the elements of the “faith workshop” from which the Apostles emerged as people fully aware of the truth which God had revealed in Jesus Christ, the truth which would shape their personal lives and the life of the Church throughout history. This gathering in Rome, dear young people, is also a kind of “faith workshop” for you, the disciples of today; it is the “faith workshop” for all who proclaim Christ at the beginning of the Third Millennium.

All of you can feel within yourselves this process of questions and answers that we have just been talking about. You can all detect the difficulties you have in believing, and even feel the temptation not to believe. But at the same time, you can also experience a gradual maturing in your sense of awareness and conviction in your faith commitment. In fact, *there is always a meeting between God and the human person in this wonderful workshop of the human spirit*, the faith workshop. The Risen Christ always enters the Upper Room of our life and allows each of us to experience his presence and to declare: You, O Christ, you are “my Lord and my God”.

Christ said to Thomas: “Because you have seen me, you have believed: blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe” (Jn 20:29). There is something of the Apostle Thomas in every human being. Each one is tempted by unbelief and each one asks the basic questions: Is it true that God exists? Is it true that he created the world? Is it true that the Son of God became man, died and rose from the dead? The answer comes as the person experiences God’s presence. *We have to open our eyes and our heart to the light of the Holy Spirit*. Then the open wounds of the Risen Christ will speak to each of us: “Because you have seen me, you have believed: blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe”.

4. Dear friends, to believe in Jesus today, to follow Jesus as Peter, Thomas, and the first Apostles and witnesses did, demands of us, just as it did in the past, that we take a stand for him, almost to the point at times of *a new martyrdom*: the martyrdom of those who, today as yesterday, are called to go against the tide in order to follow the divine Master, to follow “the Lamb wherever he goes” (Rev 14:4). It is not by chance, dear young people, that I wanted *the witnesses to the faith in the twentieth century* to be remembered at the Colosseum during this Holy Year.

Perhaps you will not have to shed your blood, but you will certainly be asked to be faithful to Christ! A faithfulness to be lived in the cir-

cumstances of everyday life: I am thinking of how difficult it is in today's world for engaged couples to be faithful to purity before marriage. I think of how the mutual fidelity of young married couples is put to the test. I think of friendships and how easily the temptation to be disloyal creeps in.

I think also of those who have chosen the path of special consecration and how they have to struggle to persevere in their dedication to God and to their brothers and sisters. I think of those who want to live a life of solidarity and love in a world where the only things that seem to matter are the logic of profit and one's personal or group interest.

I think too of those who work for peace and who see new outbreaks of war erupt and grow worse in different parts of the world; I think of those who work for human freedom and see people still slaves of themselves and of one another. I think of those who work to ensure love and respect for human life and who see life so often attacked and the respect due to life so often flouted.

5. Dear young people, in such a world is it hard to believe? Is it hard to believe in the Third Millennium? *Yes! It is hard. There is no need to hide it.* It is hard, but with the help of grace it can be done, as Jesus explained to Peter: "Neither flesh nor blood has revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven" (Mt 16:17).

This evening I will give you the Gospel. It is the Pope's gift to you at this memorable vigil. The word it contains is the word of Jesus. If you listen to it in silence, in prayer, seeking help in understanding what it means for your life from the wise counsel of your priests and teachers, then you will meet Christ and you will follow him, spending your lives day by day for him!

It is Jesus in fact that you seek when you dream of happiness; he is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you; he is the beauty to which you are so attracted; it is he who provokes you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise; it is he who urges you to

shed the masks of a false life; it is he who reads in your heart your most genuine choices, the choices that others try to stifle. It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be held back by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society, making the world more humane and more fraternal.

Dear young people, in these noble undertakings you are not alone. With you there are your families, there are your communities, there are your priests and teachers, there are so many of you who in the depths of your hearts never weary of loving Christ and believing in him. In the struggle against sin you are not alone: *so many like you are struggling and through the Lord's grace are winning!*

6. Dear friends, at the dawn of the Third Millennium I consider you as "morning watchmen" (cf. *Is 21:11-12*). In the course of the century now past young people like you were summoned to huge gatherings to learn the ways of hatred; they were sent to fight against one another. *The various godless messianic systems which tried to take the place of Christian hope have shown themselves to be truly horrendous.* Today you have come together to declare that in the new century you will not let yourselves be made into tools of violence and destruction; you will defend peace, paying the price in your person if need be. You will not resign yourselves to a world where other human beings die of hunger, remain illiterate and have no work. You will defend life at every moment of its development; you will strive with all your strength to make this earth ever more livable for all people.

Dear young people of the century now beginning, in saying "yes" to Christ, you say "yes" to all your noblest ideals. I pray that he will reign in your hearts and in all of humanity in the new century and the new millennium. Have no fear of entrusting yourselves to him! He will guide you, he will grant you the strength to follow him every day and in every situation.

5. Prayer Vigil with the Holy Father

May Mary most holy, the Virgin who said “yes” to God throughout her whole life, may Saints Peter and Paul and all the Saints who have lighted the Church’s journey down the ages, keep you always faithful to this holy resolve!

To each and every one of you I offer my blessing with affection.

At the end of his discourse to the young people, Pope John Paul II continued:

I want to conclude my message by telling you how much I was looking forward to meeting you, to seeing you first by night and then by day. I am grateful to you for this dialogue interspersed with shouts and applause. Thank you for this dialogue. Because of your initiatives and your intelligence, it was not a monologue. It was a true dialogue.

At the end of the celebration, the Holy Father greeted the young people with these words.

There is a Polish proverb that says: “Kto z zim przestaje, takim si staje”. It means: if you live with young people, you will have to become young too. That is why I am going away rejuvenated. I greet you all once again, especially those who are at the back in the shadows and who cannot see anything. Well, even if they could see nothing, they could certainly hear this “racket”. This “racket” has taken over Rome and Rome will never forget it!

During the prayer vigil, four young people gave their testimonies about the impact of faith on their lives

Christ, the source of forgiveness

I come from a country in Africa, Holy Father, where one of the longest conflicts in recent times is still going on. My name is Dominos, and I belong to a generation of young people who, from the time we were born, have only known war and its terrible consequences: the annihilation of entire families, the persecution of people from other ethnic groups, the murder of innocent people, the elderly and small children.

Almost every poor family in my country, just like my family, has been marked by the terrible effects of war. Those who have not lost a close relative have all had occasion to mourn the loss of someone in the traditional extended family.

At the beginning of the nineties, I lost my parents in conditions only known to God. After that we were left in the care of our eldest brother who was already involved in social work in rural areas.

On the morning of 20 May 1999, we received the tragic news: my brother had been found dead on the side of the street where we live, killed by six bullets. He had been abducted in the town centre the previous afternoon.

The blood of my brother is united with that of many other victims of the internal conflict in Angola. Today they continue to die in this, or even worse ways.

That was a very difficult time for me. I was filled with rebellion and a desire for vengeance, but in time I understood that my brother's blood could be a sacrifice for peace and reconciliation among us Angolans.

As a Christian, I have felt that I too have the "responsibility to call people and individuals to reconciliation and peace", as you reminded

5. Prayer Vigil with the Holy Father

us, Holy Father, during the homily of your first Eucharistic celebration in Angola, which was held in the same city where my brother was killed.

With this memory in my heart, I forgave my brother's killers, even if I do not know them personally. I wrote in his intercessory prayers the following words: "O God, forgive his killers. Do not take this sin into account. Make of his blood, and that of all the other victims of hate and vengeance, the seed for peace in Angola". Holy Father, I really believe in this.

Domingos, Angola

My name is Maria Aurora, Holy Father. I come from Romania and I belong to the Greek-Catholic Church, one of the eastern Catholic Churches of the Byzantine rite that were outlawed by order of Stalin in 1948. How much suffering, pain, and years of imprisonment followed that order ... Every now and then, in a whisper, our parents told us about it.

My mother transmitted the Catholic Christian faith to me from the time I was small. I did not understand why we did not go to Church, why I could not say that we belonged to a Church, and why we sometimes listened to the Holy Mass transmitted by Vatican radio with our ears close to the radio because nobody should know about it. When I was seven I took part in a secret liturgy celebrated by a priest who had just been released from prison where he had served time for being "an enemy of the people".

At university I got to know about twenty students who shared my religious ideas. We frequently met together secretly in a group for prayer and fellowship, forgetting that our convictions were a danger to the regime that wanted to completely subjugate people, body and soul. One day, the secret police discovered us and we were almost barred from all the university courses in the country. But we were too young. We felt really free in Christ.

At that time I attended a clandestine priestly ordination that took place in the very modest house where our bishop lived. Behind closed doors and windows, there were four people present: the bishop, an “undercover” nun, the new priest and me. It was an occasion that had a deep effect on me and changed the course of my life: my Church existed, it had its priests, and even though it could not declare itself openly, it was free in itself, free in Christ. When we finished at university, each of the twenty members of our group went our different ways in society and a different “secret” way in our faith. I too lived my faith, and I met with my friends each day after work.

At each celebration, fear and joy were in our hearts. We kept everything quiet, sang in a low voice and whispered the answers, all dressed very simply as if it were an ordinary visit. In spite of this, during the Mass I felt free. Christ could not be stopped. It was he who brought us together.

Today, that regime has fallen, but sadly, we realise that we still have a long way to go to change our hearts and the old mentality that is hard to remove. I am convinced, Holy Father, that young people will always be ready to open the door of their lives to Christ and to others, to create, also in our Romania, a future of solidarity, truth and sharing, where mutual suspicion will be abandoned and we will finally live in a free and reconciled society.

Maria Aurora, Romania

Christ our justice and dawn of a new creation

My name is Stefania, Holy Father. Four years ago, one of my contemporaries who was on death row, wrote asking for friendship and help. I and some of my friends had been involved for some time in the question of the lifting of the death penalty. But that letter asked for more: it asked for a visit. I accepted, and that is how I met other inmates, whose names, Holy Father, are not unknown to you. In fact, you have interceded for clemency for some of them. I would say that all of them have one urgent request: to be loved and accompanied. “I need you. The most important thing is friendship”, 26-year-old Dominique told me. He had been imprisoned since he was 18.

Sometimes, when one is waiting in desperation for a sign of salvation, a dialogue with God begins in a mysterious way. In his letters, John Michael asked me to pray for him: “If God forgives me”, he wrote, “I will be the happiest man on earth ... I am in the hands of God. Things could not be better”. I went to meet him in a large room full of women, mostly elderly, who were speaking to their sons. They could see them, but could not touch them. John Michael told me of his struggle to maintain his human dignity in spite of humiliations. He told me that he had not had such a long conversation for at least ten years. “I am blessed by God”, he told me, “because I have friends like you and I was able to live for 17 years, even in a place like this”.

Another person condemned to death, Joe Mario Trevino, executed on 18 August 1999, one year ago, 37 years old, wrote me the following letter: “My dearest friend, when you receive this letter I will no longer be among the living, but it’s OK because I am going to a better place, as God assured me, so please don’t be sad. Be happy because I will be with our Heavenly Father, where there is no more sorrow and suffering ... I have been extremely fortunate to be blessed with your friendship on my journey towards Heaven ... You have been good to me. You have been a good friend. Our paths were meant to cross so that I would grow spiri-

tually... I have spoken to you about other people condemned to death like me in the hope that you would find a friend to write to them. I don't know what else to say to you except that I hope we meet again soon, although let's hope not too soon. We will meet face to face. You can count on it. Goodbye ". From a cell on death row, friendship is not just like any other option. It is resistance, it is life.

Holy Father, when speaking to these people, I found I had to find words that could convey consolation and hope. I found that those condemned to death were asking for friendship, reconciliation, and forgiveness for themselves and for others. They trust in the mercy of God, and they hold the conviction that God knows what is in the heart of each one. Holy Father, we young people are convinced that evil is not overcome by death, and that each person should be given the opportunity to be absolved. We are grateful to you for your continued support so that hatred may be counterbalanced and the death penalty cancelled in every country of the world.

Stefania, Italy

Christ accompanies us on the road to holiness

I am a young person from Rome, Holy Father, and my name is Massimiliano. I belong to a generation that has never known war. I do not know what it means to be a refugee or to be deported. I was born into a society where everything can be bought, where everything seems to be within reach. I myself have had everything: health, family, studies, work, possibilities to travel and learn, friends, and above all, peace. What did I lack?

“ You lack one thing ”, Jesus said to the rich young man, “ go, sell what you have and give the money to the poor. Then come and follow me ”. I have had the grace to hear this call of the Lord since I was a boy of 15. I was not alone. I was with others in a community and I was able to respond.

I was blessed with company that helped me to come close to Jesus and to others, both near and far. I noticed that, even when I was surrounded by people at school, university and youth hangouts, I felt alone and afraid. And when one is alone, one learns to listen only to oneself, and to respond only to one’s own feelings.

The call of Jesus broke through this isolation. His words answered my anxiety and discontentment. He asked me to give to the poor and to follow him in his community. From that moment, Holy Father, I am no longer alone and no longer afraid.

But, who are the poor? Can I, young and inexperienced, do anything for them? Isn’t this too difficult? Yet Jesus insists. He himself gave example. He called the poor to him, treated them as friends and lived in their company. This is how I began to get to know poor people: by name, personally, and each time I would hear someone’s story and something about their life. I struck up a friendship with some of them.

I began to read a page of the Gospel each day so I could continue to listen to the questions addressed to Jesus and to his answers. It was not easy. There is always a temptation to love only one’s own words. But

today I understand it better. Receiving a “ drop ” of the Gospel each day makes my love for others grow.

I have discovered that the Gospel is not old. It is not yesterday’s history. Nor is it impossible to live it. It teaches me to be a friend to everyone and to love even enemies. Perhaps this is the holiness we are called to.

Scripture liberates the heart from bitterness, anger and self justification. It opens one to a wider and more merciful vision of the world, and it breaks down walls that separate people, walls between the healthy and ill, the young and old, the citizens and foreigners, the poor and the well off. It opens one’s eyes to the face of God, and that is the only reason for our love.

This way to holiness is a meeting with God and his good news. Help us, Holy Father, to renew this encounter every day and to make it genuine and real.

Massimiliano, Italy

6. CLOSING MASS OF THE 15TH WORLD YOUTH DAY

Tor Vergata – 20 August 2000

Cardinal Camillo Ruini, Vicar General of His Holiness for the Diocese of Rome, addresses the Holy Father

We are all the members and the body of one Lord

Holy Father,

The Eucharist that we are about to commence is a solemn act of gratitude to God for all that we have experienced during this extraordinary 15th World Youth Day.

Allow me, Holy Father, to speak on behalf of each of the young people who gather here in this wonderful setting, and the bishops and priests who accompany them, and the whole Christian community of Rome, and to convey our very special filial gratitude to Your Holiness. These young people, and all of us with them, immediately felt that Rome is a “common homeland”. They felt the Church to be specially close these days, just like a mother able to understand them thoroughly, even what is in their minds. This is mostly thanks to Your Holiness and your words and the way you respond to the young people, and the opportunity you have given them to read what is in your heart.

Holy Father, we have really felt like one family here. We are all the members and the body of one Lord through the same faith that we all received as a gift and that we are asked to give to our brothers and sisters.

In this Eucharist, the high point of World Youth Day, we wish to ask God that all the young people in the whole world, the new humanity

that builds the future, could all experience the joy of belonging to the family of the children of God.

Holy Father, the young people here present accept with sincere hearts the invitation you have given them to be courageous witnesses of the Gospel wherever they are in the world.

They themselves will now tell your Holiness what this World Youth Day has meant to them and they will ask you to confirm them in their faith.

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER

**If you are what you should be,
you will set the whole world ablaze!**

1. “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn 6:68).

Dear young people of the Fifteenth World Youth Day! These words of Peter, in his conversation with Christ at the end of the discourse on the “bread of life”, *affect us personally*. For the past few days, we have been meditating on John’s statement: “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14). The evangelist has brought us back to the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Son given to us through Mary “when the fullness of time had come” (Gal 4:4).

In his name I greet you all once more with great affection. I greet Cardinal Camillo Ruini, my Vicar for the Diocese of Rome and President of the Italian Episcopal Conference, and I thank him for his words at the beginning of this Mass. I also greet Cardinal James Francis Stafford, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, and the many Cardinals, Bishops and priests gathered here. With gratitude I extend respectful greetings to the President of Italy and the head of the Italian Government, as well as all the civil and religious Authorities who honour us with their presence.

2. We have reached *the high point of World Youth Day*. Yesterday evening, dear young people, we confirmed our faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God whom the Father sent, as the First Reading reminded us today, “to bring good tidings to the poor, ... to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound ... to comfort all who mourn” (Is 61:1-3).

In today’s Eucharistic celebration, Jesus helps us to come to know *a*

particular aspect of his mystery. In the Gospel, we listened to a part of his discourse in the synagogue at Capernaum after the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. In it he reveals himself as *the true bread of life*, the bread which has come down from heaven to give life to the world (cf. *Jn* 6:51). These are words that those who hear him do not understand. Their outlook is so shaped by the material world that they cannot easily grasp *what Christ really means*. They are thinking in terms of flesh, which “is of no avail” (*Jn* 6:63). Jesus’ words, instead, have to do with the unlimited horizons of the spirit: “The words that I have spoken to you – he insists – are spirit and life” (*ibid.*).

But his hearers are hesitant: “This is a hard saying, who can listen to it?” (*Jn* 6:60). They consider themselves to be persons of common sense, with their feet on the ground. For this reason they shake their heads and go away muttering, one after another. *The initial crowd gradually grows smaller.* At the end, only the tiny group of his most faithful disciples remains. But with regard to the “bread of life” Jesus *is not prepared to back down.* Rather, he is ready to lose even those closest to him: “Will you also go away?” (*Jn* 6:67).

3. “Will you also?” Christ’s question *cuts across the centuries and comes down to us*; it challenges us personally and calls for a decision. What is our answer? Dear young people, if we are here today, it is because we identify with the Apostle Peter’s reply: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (*Jn* 6:68).

Around you, you hear all kinds of words. But only Christ speaks words that stand the test of time and remain for all eternity. You are at the point in your lives when you have to make decisive choices: decisions about the direction of your studies, about work, about your role in society and in the Church. It is important to realize that among the many questions surfacing in your minds, the decisive ones are not about “what”. *The basic question is “who”*: “who” am I to go to, “who” am I to follow, “to whom” should I entrust my life?

You are thinking about love and the choices it entails, and I imagine that you agree: what is really important in life is the choice of the person who will share it with you. But be careful! *Every human person has inevitable limits*: even in the most successful of marriages there is always a certain amount of disappointment. So then, dear friends, does not this confirm what we heard the Apostle Peter say? Every human being finds himself sooner or later saying what he said: “To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life”. Only Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God and of Mary, the eternal Word of the Father born two thousand years ago at Bethlehem in Judaea, is capable of satisfying the deepest aspirations of the human heart.

In Peter’s question: “To whom shall we go?” *the answer regarding the path to follow is already given*. It is the path that leads to Christ. And it is possible to meet the divine Master personally: he is in fact truly present on the altar in the reality of his Body and Blood. In the Eucharistic Sacrifice, *we can enter into contact with the person of Jesus in a way that is mysterious but real*, drawing from the never-ending well-spring of his life as the Risen Lord.

4. This is the stupendous truth, dear friends: the Word, who took flesh two thousand years ago, *is present today in the Eucharist*. That is why the year of the Great Jubilee, in which we are celebrating the mystery of the Incarnation, had to be an “intensely Eucharistic” year as well (cf. *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 55).

The Eucharist is the sacrament of the presence of Christ, who gives himself to us because he loves us. *He loves each one of us in a unique and personal way* in our practical daily lives: in our families, among our friends, at study and work, in rest and relaxation. He loves us when he fills our days with freshness, and also when, in times of suffering, he allows trials to weigh upon us: even in the most severe trials, he lets us hear his voice.

Yes, dear friends, Christ loves us and he loves us for ever! *He loves*

us even when we disappoint him, when we fail to meet his expectations for us. He never fails to embrace us in his mercy. How can we not be grateful to this God who has redeemed us, going so far as to accept the foolishness of the Cross? To God who has come to be at our side and has stayed with us to the end?

5. To celebrate the Eucharist, “to eat his flesh and drink his blood”, means to accept the wisdom of the Cross and the path of service. It means that we signal our willingness to sacrifice ourselves for others, as Christ has done.

Our society desperately needs this sign, and young people need it even more so, tempted as they often are by the illusion of an easy and comfortable life, by drugs and pleasure-seeking, only to find themselves in a spiral of despair, meaninglessness and violence. It is crucial now *to change direction and to turn to Christ*. This is the way of justice, solidarity and commitment to building a society and a future worthy of the human person.

This is our Eucharist, this is the answer that Christ wants from us, from you young people at the closing of your Jubilee. Jesus is no lover of half measures, and he does not hesitate to pursue us with the question: “Will you also go away?” In the presence of Christ, the Bread of Life, we too want to say today with Peter: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn 6:68).

6. Dear friends, when you go back home, set the Eucharist at the centre of your personal life and community life: love the Eucharist, adore the Eucharist and celebrate it, especially on Sundays, the Lord’s Day. *Live the Eucharist by testifying to God’s love for every person.*

I entrust to you, dear friends, this greatest of God’s gifts to us who are pilgrims on the paths of time, but who bear in our hearts a thirst for eternity. May every community always have a priest to celebrate the Eucharist! I ask the Lord therefore *to raise up from among you many*

holy vocations to the priesthood. Today as always the Church needs those who celebrate the Eucharistic Sacrifice with a pure heart. The world must not be deprived of the gentle and liberating presence of Christ living in the Eucharist!

You yourselves must be *fervent witnesses to Christ's presence on the altar.* Let the Eucharist mould your life and the life of the families you will form. Let it guide all life's choices. May the Eucharist, the true and living presence of the love of the Trinity, inspire in you ideals of solidarity, and may it lead you to live in communion with your brothers and sisters in every part of the world.

In a special way, may sharing in the Eucharist lead to *a new flourishing of vocations to the religious life.* In this way the Church will have fresh and generous energies for the great task of the new evangelization. If any of you, dear young men and women, hear the Lord's inner call to give yourselves completely to him in order to love him "with an undivided heart" (cf. *1 Cor 7:34*), do not be held back by doubts or fears. Say "yes" with courage and without reserve, trusting him who is faithful to his promises. Did he not assure those who had left everything for his sake that they would have a hundredfold in this life and eternal life hereafter? (cf. *Mk 10:29-30*).

7. At the end of this World Youth Day, as I look at you now, at your young faces, at your genuine enthusiasm, from the depths of my heart I want to give thanks to God for the gift of youth, which continues to be present in the Church and in the world because of you.

Thank God for the World Youth Days! Thanks be to God for all the young people who have been involved in them in the past sixteen years! Many of them are now adults who continue to live their faith in their homes and work-places. I am sure, dear friends, that *you too will be as good as those who preceded you.* You will carry the proclamation of Christ into the new millennium. When you return home, do not grow lax. Reinforce and deepen your bond with the Christian communities to

which you belong. From Rome, from the City of Peter and Paul, the Pope follows you with affection and, paraphrasing Saint Catherine of Siena's words, reminds you: "If you are what you should be, you will set the whole world ablaze!" (cf. Letter 368).

I look with confidence to this new humanity which you are now helping to prepare. I look to this Church which in every age is made youthful by the Spirit of Christ and today is made happy by your intentions and commitment. I look to the future and make my own the words of an ancient prayer, which sings the praise of the one gift of Jesus, the Eucharist and the Church:

"I give thanks to you, Father of us all,
for the life and the knowledge
which you have revealed to us through Jesus your servant.
To you be glory in every age!
Just as this bread now broken
was wheat scattered far and wide upon the hills
and, when harvested, became one bread,
so too let your Church be gathered into your kingdom
from the far ends of the earth...
You, O Lord almighty, have created the universe
to the glory of your name;
you have given people food
and drink for their comfort,
so that they may give you thanks;
but to us you have given a spiritual food and drink
and eternal life through your Son...
Glory be to you for ever!" (*Didache* 9:3-4; 10:3-4)
Amen.

After the Mass, Cardinal James Francis Stafford, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, thanks the Holy Father

The power of the Cross

Holy Father! One of the supreme expressions of your apostolic ministry is the charism of gathering. In August 2000 with its summers breezes, the full moon, and yes, even the Roman sun, your exercise of the Petrine ministry by gathering us has again taught young people the meaning of Jesus's words, "Whoever does not gather with me scatters".

For sixteen years, you have gathered your "dear young people" along innumerable pilgrim roads. They include modern highways, the "Way of the Stars" to Santiago de Compostela, ancient routes to Our Lady's shrines and *la strada romea*.

A persistent question has arisen. One *Romeo* phrased it this way, "Why did the Holy Father in 1984 give the young people of the world the Pilgrim Cross to carry along all these roads?" Another answered by mentioning the deaths of thousands of Catholics at the hands of his government and its effects, "Because I have suffered much, I have died". The reality of being baptized into the likeness of Jesus's death was found through his suffering.

The Petrine ministry of gathering is the opposite of the idolatry of "the green light". Belief in "the light being always green" is becoming widespread. People have invested themselves in a life without asceticism. You have warned of this, Holy Father.

The Pilgrim Cross gives other signals. It says that discipline, separation and uprooting are the means of assembling the pilgrim Church. The cross recalls the precious Blood of Jesus. It says that God's way of love is shown by illuminating everything else from his own powerlessness. And young peoples' way of love cannot be otherwise.

Beneath the Roman Cross tens of thousands have become aware

that belief in the green light leads to the inferno in which many are submerged. It has taught them that the always green-light leads to self-hatred and hatred of others. Hatred itself is the inferno. But the underground in which they live is not an irreversible condition. It can be a transition. The glory of God revealed in Jesus's pierced body is a lightning-bolt. It holds spellbound those who glimpse it. In Rome pilgrims learn that life is "a tragedy under grace".

Many have discovered that the highest good can be found in forgiveness. This explains why tens of thousands of young pilgrims under the Cross have found Christ and the tears of repentance in the Sacrament of Penance at the Circus Maximus.

Living the reality of the Cross has confirmed the truth of all this. You have first shown the way, Holy Father. Your own life and ministry have confirmed the power of the Cross. From the first moments of your Pontificate you have urged young people not to be afraid for in the life of Jesus and in the lives of his disciples there is a dramatic convergence of freedom and of obedience.

Holy Father! These hundreds of thousands of young pilgrims thank you for personal witness, for your gathering them here, and for your exercise of the Petrine ministry.

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER BEFORE THE “ANGELUS DOMINI”

Young people of the world, “my joy and my crown”

At the conclusion of this Eucharistic celebration our thoughts turn to the “Woman” about whom Saint Paul spoke in the second reading of today’s Mass (*Gal 4:4*): the Blessed Virgin Mary, on whose feast of the Assumption we began this Fifteenth World Youth Day. With her loving and motherly presence Mary has guided these days in Rome, days of an intense experience of faith. We wish to express all our gratitude to her for her “yes” which marked the beginning of the “adventure” of our Redemption.

As I ask the Blessed Virgin to watch over all the youth of the world, boys and girls alike, I express heartfelt thanks to you who have taken part in this Fifteenth World Youth Day.

I greet and thank first of all those who organized this event: the Pontifical Council for the Laity, guided by Cardinal James Francis Stafford; the Vicariate of Rome and the Italian Episcopal Conference, led by Cardinal Camillo Ruini; the President and members of the Italian Committee for the Fifteenth World Youth Day, as well as the parish communities of Rome and neighbouring Dioceses, their associations, movements and groups, which for nearly three years have prayed and worked with enthusiasm to prepare for this event. I ask all of you to see to it that the rich legacy of good which this common undertaking has produced is not wasted.

I also thank the public Authorities, who with great dedication ensured that the complex organizational machinery of the World Youth Day functioned in the best way possible.

Finally I greet so many Cardinals and Bishops present, as well as the priests, the Religious women and men, the teachers and all of you, young people of the world, “my joy and my crown” (*Phil 4:1*).

Before we leave this great and beautiful gathering, I want to announce that the next World Youth Day will be held in Toronto,

Canada, in the summer of 2002. I invite the young people of the world to set out towards this goal right now. I offer a special greeting to the Canadian delegation who wanted to be here at this celebration to accept the handover of responsibility. Upon them and all that they are undertaking I invoke the protection of the Virgin Mary.

I would like to greet those present again.

The Holy Fathers greets the young people in different languages. In English he says:

Dear young people, we must say good-bye until the next time. Your pilgrim journey in the footsteps of Jesus must continue wherever you go. Take with you Jesus's words of life, and spread them everywhere! God be with you!

Then the Pope continues in Italian

With affection and gratitude I greet you all. Let us all together ask Our Lady to protect each one of us on our journey.

* * *

After leading the recitation of the Angelus, the Holy Father said extemporaneously:

Once again I would like to thank the Lord our God for this exceptional and splendid gathering, which has exceeded all our expectations. You have not only taken over Rome; it has now become yours, because Peter is here! You are the Church's youthful heart! Go into the whole world and bring peace. The Lord is risen; he is walking with you. Be his witnesses among your peers at the dawn of the new millennium!

APPENDIX

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Paul VI Hall, 23 August 2000

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II

I will never be able to forget the enthusiasm of those young people

1. Last week Rome experienced an unforgettable event: World Youth Day, which made a deep and vivid impression on everyone. It was a pilgrimage marked by joy, prayer and reflection.

The first sentiment we naturally feel in our heart is one of sincere gratitude to the Lord for this truly great gift, not only to our city and to the Church in Italy, but to the whole world. I also thank those who in various ways helped to bring about this meeting, which took place peacefully and with the greatest order. I once again express my gratitude to everyone: the Pontifical Council for the Laity, the Central Committee for the Jubilee, the Italian Episcopal Conference, the Diocese of Rome, the civil and administrative authorities, the police force, the medical services, the University of Tor Vergata and the various volunteer organizations.

2. Our thoughts naturally turn to this truly extraordinary meeting, which exceeded all expectations and, I would say, even all human

expectations. I feel an ardent desire to tell those young people again of my joy at being able to welcome them on the evening of the Solemnity of the Assumption in the squares at St John Lateran and St Peter's.

I still feel the deep emotion I experienced in taking part in the Saturday evening Vigil at Tor Vergata and in presiding at the solemn closing Mass the next day.

As I flew over that area by helicopter, I marvelled from above at a unique and impressive sight: an enormous human carpet of festive people, happy to be together. I will never be able to forget the enthusiasm of those young people. I would have liked to embrace them all and to express to each one the affection that ties me to the youth of our time, to whom the Lord entrusts a great mission in the service of the civilization of love.

What, or better who, did the young people come to seek if not Jesus Christ? What is World Youth Day if not a personal and community encounter with the Lord which reveals the true meaning of human existence? In fact, it is he who first seeks them out and calls them, as he seeks out and calls every human being in order to bring them to salvation and full happiness. At the end of the meeting, it was also he who entrusted to young people the special mission of being his witnesses in every corner of the world. These were days marked by the discovery of a friendly and faithful presence, that of Jesus Christ, as we celebrate the 2,000th anniversary of his birth.

3. The young people, with the enthusiasm typical of their age, replied that they intend to follow Jesus. They want to do so because they feel that they are a living part of the Church. They want to do so by walking together, because they regard themselves as the pilgrim People of God.

Their weakness does not frighten them because they count on the love and mercy of the heavenly Father, who sustains them in their daily lives. Beyond every race and culture, they feel like brothers and sisters linked by one faith, one hope, one and the same mission: to set the

world on fire with God's love. The young people have shown that they have a need for meaning. They seek reasons for hope and hunger for authentic spiritual experiences.

May the message of World Youth Day be welcomed and reflected on by all who have taken part, as well as by their peers, who have followed the various phases and events through newspapers, radio and television!

The Gospel atmosphere experienced in those days must not be lost; on the contrary, it must continue to be the atmosphere of the youth communities and associations, of the parishes and Dioceses, especially during this Jubilee Year, which invites all believers to meet Christ, who died and rose for us.

I would like to repeat to all young people: be proud of the mission which the Lord has entrusted to you; carry it out with humble and generous perseverance. May you be sustained by the maternal help of Mary, who watched over you during the days of your Jubilee. Christ and his Church are counting on you!

II

7TH INTERNATIONAL YOUTH FORUM

*“I say it to you all: let us walk in the footsteps
of Christ!” (Jn 1:14)*

(JP II, Letter regarding pilgrimage to holy places, 29-6-1999)

Roma, 12-15 August 2000

PROGRAMME

Saturday 12th August

Who do you say that I am? (Mk 8:29)

PLENARY ASSEMBLY

- Opening celebration
- Opening address: *Jubilee: a time of grace and a time of mission*
 - Card. James Francis Stafford, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity
- Presentation of delegates

PLENARY ASSEMBLY

- Talk: *Christ: the long-awaited response to the longings of humankind*
- Msgr. André-Mutien Léonard, Bishop of Namur (Belgium)
- Talk: *Why believe? The challenges of faith today*
- Msgr. Rino Fisichella, Auxiliary Bishop of Rome

The challenges of faith today

- Workshops (on 4 topics for discussion suggested by the speaker)

PLENARY ASSEMBLY

- Opportunity for free interventions on the day's topics

Holy Mass

Sunday 13th August

I by my works will show you my faith (Jas 2:18)

MORNING PRAYER AND HOLY MASS

PLENARY ASSEMBLY

- Talk: *The kind of faith that has an impact on our lives*
- Ernesto Olivero, Founder of SERMIG (Youth Missionary Service), Turin
- Talk: *Holiness: call and response*
- Fr. Jesús Castellano Cervera, Dean of the Pontificio Istituto Teresiano, Rome
- Question time: opportunity for exchange with the speakers

PLENARY ASSEMBLY

- Testimonies: *What impact has faith had on your life?*
- Michel Remery, The Netherlands
- Matteo and Agnese Renzi, Italy
- Sr. Regina Marie Donohue, USA
- Question time: opportunity for exchange with those who gave witness.

The impact of faith on our lives

- Workshops

PLENARY ASSEMBLY

- Opportunity for free interventions on the day's topics

PENITENTIAL SERVICE

Monday 14th August

You shall be my witnesses to the ends of the earth (cf. Acts 1:8)

MORNING PRAYER AND HOLY MASS

PLENARY ASSEMBLY

- Talk: *Faith: a gift to share*
- Timothy O'Donnell, Dean of Christendom College, USA
- Talk: *Ways to faith*
- Fr. Dominique Sentucq, Head of the National Catechumenate Service, France

PLENARY ASSEMBLY

- Panel: *To take the Gospel into the new millennium*
 - family
 - education
 - Church
 - work
 - culture and mass media
 - voluntary service

Faith: a gift to share

- Workshops

PLENARY ASSEMBLY

- Opportunity for free interventions

MARIAN PRAYER

Tuesday 15th August

You are the salt of the earth; you are the light of the world

(Mt 5:13,14)

PLENARY ASSEMBLY

- Morning prayer
- Presentation of the Forum “Memorandum”
- Opportunity for free interventions

PLENARY ASSEMBLY

- Free interventions (continued)
- Closing address: *The love of Christ impels us to respond*
 - Card. James Francis Stafford, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity

CLOSING CELEBRATION WITH HOLY MASS

GUIDELINES FOR THE WORKSHOPS

SATURDAY 12 – *The challenges of faith today*

- What kind of impulse do you receive in your life today by being a disciple of Jesus Christ?
- What obstacles does it cause in your professional, personal and social life?
- In what way do you think that the ever-new challenges of the Gospel can improve the world and the lives of the people of our times?

SUNDAY 13 – *The impact of faith on our lives*

- How would you describe a “ saint ”? Have you ever met one? Do you think that holiness is possible for everyone? What exactly does it mean to be a saint today for a young person of your age in your country?
- Could you tell us about an event that happened to you or to someone you know in which faith transformed daily life?
- How can a young Christian today be a sign of the goodness of God in a world that seems to have no interest in God or in faith?

MONDAY 14 – *Faith: a gift to share*

- How can communion with the God of the Trinity be today’s answer to so much individualism and so many divisions in your country?
- When and how have you experienced the beauty of sharing the gift of faith with your sisters and brothers?
- How would you retell the Gospel of Jesus today in the language of young people like you who share the same aspirations and walk the same roads of communion?

OPENING SESSION

Jubilee: a time of grace and a time of mission

JAMES FRANCIS Card. STAFFORD

President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity

I wish to welcome you to this Seventh International Youth Forum. It is a time for your experience of faith to be nourished by the essentials of Christianity: God can speak a Word and we can hear his Word; prayer and contemplation as the leaven of human existence; the sacraments as the food of eternal life; and universal friendship and love as the law of the Church's life and mission.

Cities have their own distinct characteristics. New York is known as 'the Big Apple', Paris as 'the City of Light', Denver as 'the Mile High City'. But only Rome is called 'the Eternal City', That title has distinguished Rome for millennia. Even in the first century BC, the Latin elegiac poet Tibullus used it. Although its origins go back to pagan times, the title has been taken over by Christians. A Puritan in the 19th century, Nathaniel Hawthorne, repeated the same theme in different words. Rome is "the city of all times, and of all the world", he wrote. His New England ancestors would have been puzzled. In 1901 a young English Catholic, Hilaire Belloc, on pilgrimage by foot through Europe to Rome described his purpose, "Nor ever [did I turn] my face to home, till it had slaked my heart at Rome".

How did this idea of Christian Rome as the Eternal City arise? I have two hunches. The first is very concrete. Rome is called the Eternal City because its streets have no lack of old stones to walk on. The second hunch is about theater. The city of Rome is a giant urban theater in which the unique, universal drama is always being enacted. This divine

drama is everywhere in the world but its evidence is uniquely transparent in Rome. The City itself is the apogee of a divine drama. The drama is about eternal things; thus the permanence of its name among Christians, the Eternal City.

So your pilgrimage knapsacks should carry home two concrete memories: Rome's old street stones and Rome as a unique theater of a universal drama. The first speaks of the Roman pilgrimage as a time of grace, or, as I prefer because mission also requires grace if it is of God, a time of God's call; the second speaks of your mission in freedom within the divine drama of God's creation and redemption. These aspects of the Great Jubilee Year 2000 need further elaboration.

I. There is no lack of old stones in Roman streets. How does this explain Christians' use of 'Eternal Rome'? It sounds far-fetched, especially when one recalls that the Book of Revelation calls Rome 'Babylon'.

Here is my reasoning. Your feet are already aware of these stones. They are indestructible. The city's ancient cobblestones have received the imprint of human feet for nearly three millennia. So graces of your Roman pilgrimage will originate from the bottom up. Christian memories of Rome find first entrance through the soles of pilgrims' feet. You will find traces of grace with every footstep.

What do the feet of pilgrims say about Eternal Rome? They will first raise a question. It is both reasonable and historical. Who walked upon them before you?

The evidence is abundant. The Christian community was first present in Rome in the early 40's of the first century AD. That is over 1960 years ago. For nearly 60 generations Christians have walked the streets of Rome.

We know that the Emperor Claudius expelled the Christians from Rome in 49 AD. Among those refugees were a husband and wife, Prisca and Aquila, mentioned in Paul's Letter to the Romans (16:3), Acts and

in his first Letter to the Corinthians (*1 Cor* 16:19). These displaced Romans were constantly on the move. Later they set up a residence in Corinth when Paul arrived there in 50 AD. A year and a half later they left for Ephesus with Paul (*Acts* 18:11, 18-19). According to *Acts* (18:26) and *1 Cor* (16:19), they were still in Ephesus in the year 54 when Paul returned from visiting Jerusalem and Antioch, and in early 57 when he wrote *1 Cor*. Because riots in 57 AD broke out in Ephesus against Christians, Paul left (*Acts* 19:2-20:1). Imitating their procedure at Corinth, Prisca and Aquila probably left at the same time. They returned to Rome because the Emperor Claudius had died in 54, and the first years of Nero's reign were popular and not hostile to Christians. Prisca and Aquila were formidable missionaries. They walked the stones of Rome.

Sacred writings in the New Testament had Rome as their origin or destination. The Letter to the Hebrews was sent to the Church of Rome. The First Letter of St. Peter was composed in Rome and first sent from here. St. Paul sent his longest and most important letter to Rome in 58 AD. Most probably it was first read by that earliest Christian generation of Jews and Gentiles in the Trastevere neighborhood where the port of Rome was located. St. Mark wrote his Gospel in Rome under the influence of St. Peter. During WYD the Holy Scriptures in the form of the Gospel of St. Mark will be handed on to you to recall your Baptism.

Peter lived in Rome and walked its streets. He was crucified in the Circus of Nero in 67 AD, south of the Vatican Hill, and was buried nearby. St. Peter's Basilica marks the place of his martyrdom and burial.

Paul also walked upon the stones of Roman streets on two occasions. According to the Acts of the Apostles (28), he first came to Rome as a prisoner in 61 AD and remained until 63 AD. After extensive missionary journeys, he was imprisoned again in Rome and was beheaded in 67 AD at the *Tre Fontane*. His body was buried within two kilometers distance on the Ostian Way. His tomb is beneath the main altar of the Basilica of St. Paul-outside-the-Walls.

Over the centuries many young pilgrims have walked over the old

stones and crossed the threshold of the *martyria* of the Apostles, Peter and Paul. Among them we find in the fourth century a youthful student, St. Jerome; in the seventh century a youthful English king, St. Caedwalla; in the thirteenth century a youthful St. Francis of Assisi; in the fourteenth century a youthful St. Catherine of Siena; in the eighteenth century a youthful St. Benedict Joseph Labre; in the nineteenth century a youthful St. Theresa of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face; and in the twentieth century a youthful Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati.

You may ask how their Roman pilgrimage affected these young *Romei*. They each discovered or deepened God's calling to grace in their lives. The teenaged student, Jerome, visited the Roman catacombs on Sundays with two friends. He later asked to receive "the vesture of Christ" in 366, a reference to the white garment in which the newly baptized person was clothed on coming up from the baptismal bath.

In his late twenties, St. Caedwalla was baptized in St. Peter's Basilica by Pope St. Sergius I on Easter in 689. King Caedwalla or Peter, his baptismal name, immediately took ill. He wished to die while still wearing his white baptismal garment. He died at 30 years of age and was buried in St. Peter's. His long metrical epitaph has been preserved on the original stone from old St. Peter's. He was the first of at least 10 English kings to walk upon these old stones.

In Assisi Francis had shown a generous heart at age 25. In 1206 he came to the tomb of St. Peter's. Reaching into his purse for a handful of money, he threw it all into the small window piercing Peter's burial chamber. The old stones of Rome had reconfirmed him in his conviction that poverty and pilgrimage were one. A couple of years later, St. Francis indicated to Brother Masseo his intention to walk again to Rome. He said, "My dear companion, let us go to Rome, to St. Peter and St. Paul, and let us pray to them to teach us and help us to possess the infinite treasure of holy poverty" (*Fioretti*, 13).

Before her death at age 33 Catherine of Siena crossed the ancient Bridge of S. Angelo every day for almost two years beginning in 1378 to

attend Mass at St. Peter's. Today a beautiful marble statue marks the stony path she took. Looking intensely at one of the bridges across the Tiber River, her stone figure is in rapid motion toward it. It's easy to figure out the reason. In *The Dialogue*, Catherine wrote that Jesus is the bridge made of stones reaching between God and man.

After his long pilgrimage from his native France, Benedict Joseph Labre lived in Rome as a lifelong beggar in the 1780's. He slept each night in one of the archways of the Colosseum.

In her young adult years St. Theresa wrote that at the age of 14 she discovered in Rome the spirit of divine play which eventually became her doctrine of spiritual childhood. On the pilgrim stones of the Eternal City she found that the universe of love is also a universe of play. She wrote, "For some time past, I had offered myself to the Child Jesus to be his plaything. I told him to treat me, not like a precious toy such as children only look at and dare not touch, but like a little ball of no value ... And he has granted my prayer. In Rome, Jesus pierced his little toy... no doubt he wished to see what was inside and then satisfied by his discovery, he dropped his little ball and went to sleep".

Pier Giorgio Frassati's pilgrimage to Rome in 1921 at the age of 20 years was attacked violently by the anti-Catholic Royal Guards near the Church of the *Gesù* on the *Via del Plebiscito*. In the courtyard of the nearby Altieri Palace, Pier Giorgio knelt down, held up his rosary beside an injured priest and invited all his young comrades being held there to pray "for us and for all those who have hit us".

As I mentioned earlier, each of these youthful pilgrims was a *romeo*. In medieval days *romeo* meant one who "fulfilled a visit to the thresholds of the saints Peter and Paul". Together with Jerome, Caedwalla, Francis, Catherine, Benedict Joseph, Theresa and Pier Giorgio, the angels and saints are praying that your adventures on the old stones of Rome will lead to a spiritual discovery. Of course, a *romeo* knows that all spiritual adventures are Calvaries.

The Roman stones are more than works of the sun. They are silent

rhapsodists of heroes and heroines of God, mirrors of saints and martyrs. The great embrace of Peter in the colonnade forming the *piazza San Pietro* is crowned with their statues. They yield their strength to pilgrims. They are occasions of grace. Pilgrims' feet become conduits to the human heart for living memories to lodge.

Never before have young pilgrims come in such numbers to Rome as are coming in the next week. The only comparable events in the past were the hostile armies of young men who stormed across the roads of Europe to Rome.

These Roman stones, makings of colossal fires, recall the Rock, Peter, the Vicar of Christ. St. Peter's definitive form was forged near the upright granite of Nero. That Rock of Eternal Rome cannot be broken. It is that Rock upon which the feet of Francis of Assisi confidently trod as well as Catherine, Benedict Joseph Labre, Theresa and Pier Giorgio. And the feet of today's young pilgrims can learn from the same cryptic stones why Rome has been called by Christians 'the Eternal City'. You will discover or deepen the grace of your calling if you sing your songs of praise to God along the stone ways of Rome with them and others who are part of the communion of saints.

II. Rome itself is the apex, the apogee of divine drama. It is a divine theater on a grand scale. Our Roman Christian ancestors knew well that the mysteries of revelation can be understood through the parable of the world as a theater with God as its director. Rome makes pilgrims attentive to the magnificent world theater of creation and the history of salvation, and the exciting dramas of our martyrs. On the city's interior and exterior stages, pilgrims will find reflections of the theo-drama of Christ. In Rome Christ is the recapitulation and end of all tragedy. It insists that your lives are not the theater of the absurd or the theater of escapism or the theater of illusion. In Christ's drama, pilgrims discover in freedom their own unique mission, their personal part. Christ's death and Resurrection are the nor-

mative drama of all time and places; all human freedoms are inserted in the drama of his freedom. In this divine drama you will discover your unique, personal mission.

The Eternal City reveals that your life is part of a divine drama with consequences which go on forever and forever. It is a drama of two freedoms – human freedom and divine freedom. The Holy Father places before you the incredible proclamation of the theo-drama and God’s action on behalf of the world. “ And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us ”. These words describe the beginning of the eternal drama. It is the glorious reality we celebrate in the Great Jubilee Year at the beginning of the third millennium. It is the entire reason for your pilgrimage to Rome. Here your mission as a freely extemporizing actor in the divine drama will become focused.

Eternal Rome calls you to a holy conversation with God and with one another. This *sacra conversatio* is about your mission in this divine drama. It is the mission given to you by God. As baptized laymen and laywomen, your mission is clear: testify to the incarnate Word, give witness to Jesus Christ. With liturgical and biblical studies, the drama of the Incarnate Word is more evident – and more beautiful – in our days than in many previous centuries. Your mission is to reflect upon the drama of that Word. And the Holy Scriptures, the written word of God, uniquely testify to that drama. On the world stage your role in life becomes your Christian mission received as a free gift from God in Christ and freely embraced by you.

For the remaining few moments reflect with me on the testimony of two lay baptized. They discovered the drama of Christ in the written word of God. The evidence of their discovery can be found in Eternal Rome. These two laymen are concrete witnesses to the mission you have been given: to search the written word for the drama of the incarnate Word and thereby discover how you are inserted into that drama. In that process you will become convinced of the beauty, goodness and truth of the Incarnate Word and act upon it in the world.

1. The first lay testimony to the drama of Christ in Rome is Gian Lorenzo Bernini. In St. Peter's Basilica there are two depictions of the crucifixion by him on the side altars. They are frequently overlooked by the shadows and details of the interior. It is clear that Bernini reflected deeply upon the drama of the Incarnate Word found in the Sacred Scriptures. His art depicts this drama of divine love and freedom.

The two crucifixes represent the Incarnate Word in two different time-frames of his tortured death on the Cross. In any one place an individual artist depicts Christ crucified only in one phase of his dying. But on these altars Gian Lorenzo Bernini gives us separate meditations on two successive stages of Jesus's agonies. Each is beautiful in the Christian sense of being glorious, i.e. reflecting the divine glory. In their contrasting forms together they convey something which, separately, is missing. Together they reveal a different kind of beauty, the paradox of God's love for us revealed in suffering.

The first chronological frame depicts "the living Christ". Jesus is seen in his cry of dereliction. "Father, why have you abandoned me?" His slender body is writhing in a complicated S-curve. It is subtly swinging to the right. His head, lifted high towards the heavens, is addressing the awful question to his Father.

The other depicts "the dead Christ". His head is sunk low. Bernini captures Jesus's form from the words of the Gospel, "'It is finished'; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit" (*Jn 19:30*). His lifeless arms are stretched like a taut bow. His legs are limp. His body slumps. His pierced side shows an open wound.

In walking from one altar to another, the two time-frames of the suffering Christ convey the horror of his torture. In "the dead Christ", it is clear that his corpse had been imprinted with the agony of crucifixion for six hours as the Gospels indicate. He had been wounded, tortured and beaten. The dead weight of his body is held up by the slender arms. Traces of warmth and life are still evident since only minutes separate the "the living Christ" and "the dead Christ".

2. Another layman has left in St. Peter's his own independent reflections on the suffering and death of the Word of God. Giacomo Manzù was a 20th century Italian sculptor who enhanced the dramatic character of Eternal Rome. One of the five doors of the Basilica is called the Door of Death. It originally was the door through which the body of a deceased person was through. The present bronze door was completed in 1964.

The upper right-hand panel depicts graphically the removal of Jesus's body from the Cross. Joseph of Arimathea, stripped to his waist, has tied a long cord under the arms and shoulders of the corpse. On the left side of the Cross Joseph is straining and pulling against the dead weight. Grasping the huge cord with both hands, he slowly lowers the body from the Cross. A solitary woman, Mary of Magdala, is weeping. She places her head in her left arm leaning against the right side of the vertical wooden beam of the Cross.

The corpse of the Son of God is not yet rigid. There is still a look of suffering in the immobile face, as though he were still feeling. Yet the face has not been spared in the least. It is emaciated. It is clear that Jesus's body has been fearfully crushed by blows and beatings.

The cord plays a key interpretive role. Manzù must have had in mind some scriptural texts. One recalls the Christological 18th psalm: "The cords of death encompassed me, the torrents of perdition assailed me; the cords of Sheol entangled me, the snares of death confronted me" (4-5). The scene is presenting the inconceivable: God is being lowered into hell. The scriptures indicate that God explored every available path, even to descending into the hideous darkness of Sheol, to bring the person back whose sins Christ has borne, even if that person rejects him. Ezekiel captures something of this divine suffering in human form depicted by Manzù. "O Son of Man, behold cords will be placed upon you" (*Ezek* 3:25).

The disciples and the women who stood by the cross during those interminable hours must have had a vague experience of all this. But

one is forced to ask the question before Manzù's meditation and contemplation on the scriptures. How could they have believed that this bruised and beaten martyr, encompassed with rope, would rise again and actually become a source of their hope?

As a matter of fact, this question is posed both by Bernini's two frames of Christ's agony and by Manzù's descent from the Cross: if death is so awful and the laws of nature so mighty, how can they be overcome? In both the Son of God has been totally buried in the baptism of sin.

But Jesus rose again to the bosom of the Father, taking with him those he saved from the tide of sin, who are "destined to be his sons" (*Eph* 1:5). By the Sacrament of Baptism, you have essentially been "baptized into Christ's death, buried with him", under the waters that submerged him.

By the new birth through Baptism, you have been saved and become a new creation. Three times you were washed or plunged in the sacred water, signifying Christ's burial for three days. By this action, you died and you were born. For you the saving water was at once a grave and the womb of a mother. Baptismal water marked your first conversion. Your second conversion is in the tears of repentance in the Sacrament of Penance.

During WYD you should meditate especially on the divine drama of the Eucharist. Every day you will eat the bread of life and death. It reveals the inner dynamic of Christian discipleship, the dynamic of dying-and-rising with Christ. The Spirit of Christ breathed out onto a mankind redeemed by the Passion when the Son in dying gives the Spirit back to the Father, is simultaneously the Spirit both of Cross and Resurrection. He is the Spirit of the Father giving his Son in suffering for his mission in the world but also the Spirit of the Son giving himself in sacrifice and glorification. The Spirit thus enfolds within himself the movement toward the Cross (the Incarnation and the historic ministry) and the movement from the Cross to the resurrection.

Rome is the apogee of the divine-human drama in Christ. This drama of Christ confronts you with your mission in life, in marriage, in work. Rome, the City of the-drama, addresses two questions to each of you. First, are you willing to believe that the drama of God's infinite love for you is revealed in Christ's suffering. And secondly, are you willing to accept and embrace that your own mission in life is mirrored in the mission of self-giving love of the eternal Word of God made man? The realization of the divine image in you depends on your response. For your mission is defined by the fact that the image of God lies in the created mirroring of uncreated freedom, in your imitation in the world of Christ's love for you by being consumed by love for your neighbors.

Travelling with the Cross

*Greeting by young people from Italy who bring the WYD Cross
to the 7th International Youth Forum*

Dear friends from all over the world, welcome! In the name of all Italians, we are here with joy and affection to greet you and welcome you to Rome for the 15th World Youth Day.

Hi. My name is Matteo and I'm twenty-five. I am here with two hundred and fifty other young people from Mantua. We have walked across half of Italy to bring you this Cross.

Our group of pilgrims set out from Castiglione delle Stiviere on 14th July. That is the place where Saint Luigi Gonzaga, patron saint of youth, was born. He died in Rome.

Now finally after four weeks of travelling and commitment, we have arrived to give this Cross back to the youth of the world. We wanted to do something very specific for the jubilee year, hence this pilgrimage.

We have experienced with each step how the difficulties involved in renouncing daily comforts can be transformed into joy when we share a project together.

That project was and is Jesus Christ who is always among us; a constant presence, vibrant and visible in all situations: in our catechesis meetings, our celebrations, when fatigue set in, when everything seemed to go wrong.

The surprise and emotion of the people we met was testimony for us of the importance of the Cross we carried on our backs.

There were people who asked us to pray for them in their difficulties and illness because they were no longer able to pray.

We wish to thank the dioceses and parishes that received us with such generosity, love and patience.

We came to the realisation that we are all equal under the wood of the Cross and there are absolutely no differences.

As we went along on foot with the Cross, we came to understand that the most important things are the simplest and most sincere.

As we progressed on this journey, we fell very much in love with this Cross. I think you will understand that, after a month of travelling with it, we are a little sad at handing it over, but we are really happy to give it to you because this Cross is not ours alone. It belongs to everyone and is for everyone.

In fact, we see this gesture as the end of our pilgrimage but also the start of a new life where the Cross is not made of wood, but it is one that we have to carry with us every day.

The Cross we believe in is not a sign of death and desperation, but one of hope and joy. Take it and take it to the world with joy, trust and courage.

Matteo Pedrazzani
Italy, Diocese of Mantua

PRESENTATIONS

1. Christ, the response to the longings of humanity

Msgr. ANDRÉ-MUTIEN LÉONARD
Bishop of Namur (Belgium)

There are two contrasting aspects to this topic, and I would like to illustrate them with two series of quotations from the Gospels. Here is the first series, illustrating how Jesus wishes to respond to the deep longings of the human heart:

– “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest” (*Mt 11:28*).

– “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink” (*Jn 7:37*).

– “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (*Jn 10:7-10*).

Here is another series of quotations illustrating how, on the other hand, Jesus turns the immediate expectations of the human heart upside down:

– “If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than to have two hands or two feet and to be thrown into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into the hell of fire” (*Mt 18:8-9*).

- “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (*Mt* 5:48).
- “Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple” (*Lk* 14:26-27).
- “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me” (*Lk* 9:23).
- “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it” (*Mt* 10:34-39).

How can we understand this contrast? We see such a contradiction between the gentleness with which Jesus responds to the longings of the human heart and then the way he handles them so roughly.

My dear friends, do you like Pope John Paul II? If you do, you also like what he does. Do I presume rightly? Before he became Pope, he was a teacher of philosophy, and he is still very interested in philosophy. So, let us do some philosophy together...

Take the example of a cat. How can you keep it happy? That is easy. You give it a partner and some kittens, a saucer of milk, a few mice, a ball of wool to play with, a basket to sleep in beside the fire, a garden to explore, and the cat will purr with contentment.

For a human being it is quite different. Our hearts are possessed by an openness without limits. Our intellect reaches out to embrace the whole of reality, moved by an insatiable curiosity that no limited sum

total of knowledge could satisfy. The same thing holds for the human will. We have an unlimited desire that no number of objects, no matter how wonderful, can satisfy. That is why, as Saint Augustine said, the human heart is a “restless heart” (*cor inquietum*), a heart that knows no rest until it finds the fullness of being, or better still, the fullness of the One who is Being in person: “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in you” (Augustine).

In contrast to a cat, human beings can only find achievement beyond themselves. As Pascal said, “Man infinitely surpasses man”. The Greeks dreamed of fulfilment being possible, where individuals could find contentment within the harmonious limits of their mortal nature on this side of the world of the gods. Because of Christ, we have discovered the truth engraved into our metaphysical nature: we know that the human person can only be fulfilled in God. This yearning is so deeply entrenched in us that we can speak of a “natural desire” to see God.

By presenting us with the possibility of deep communion between God and humanity, and by offering it to us in his own person, he who is truly human and truly God, Jesus fulfils our deepest desires. He gives ear to our ultimate aspirations, but at the same time he overturns our immediate wishes, because we must find our happiness beyond ourselves. Finally, Jesus offers us peace of heart, but he does not guarantee immediate rest.

This overturning of our immediate desires is so much more disturbing because we have lived in a broken world since the time of original sin. It is a world subjected to futility and surrendered to the powers of obscurity, as Saint Paul tells us (*Rm* 8:20). In this world that was created good by God but was then disfigured by sin, the human heart was also hurt by original sin. We have always begun by saying “no” before we say “yes”. We always refuse God before we consent to his grace. We instinctively seem to climb the wrong slope, and it is a slippery slope! To use a familiar expression, when hurt human nature is left to its own devices, it is a metaphysical “loose cannon”!

By offering us the only happiness capable of really satisfying our desires, Jesus must necessarily urge us to go beyond ourselves in two ways: 1) To go beyond our created human nature that is finite and limited because it is made to be completed in God; 2) To go beyond the innate selfishness of our sinful hearts that are ever in need of conversion. In that way, Christ inevitably asks of us a double mortification of our immediate desires.

I could say that Jesus, unlike any other, resolves the equation of human existence. This is because, to save us from evil and sadness and to satisfy our hearts, we need: 1) a God that can pull us out of distress and assuage our hearts; 2) a person who can understand us from within; 3) a God- person who can rescue us from our deadly predicaments; 4) a person-God who can go through our difficulties and open up access to everlasting life. Jesus, true God and true man, crucified and risen, alone solves the equation of human existence. By doing this, he responds to our deepest desires. But he will only completely satisfy us if we respond to an enormous demand that knocks over our immediate aspirations, that demand that Pope John Paul II frequently tells you about with force and gentleness.

That is why the moral teaching of the New Testament, especially that of Saint Paul, can be summed up as dying to oneself with Christ in order to live with him in the fullness of God.

“ If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory ” (*Col 3:1-4*).

2. Why believe? The challenges of faith today

Msgr. RINO FISICHELLA
Auxiliary Bishop of Rome

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

“That one can be blinded by the sun and still go into combat was demonstrated by the Romans at Zamo”, Kierkegaard wrote in his *Post scriptum*. “The Romans at Zamo proved that one can fight blindly and still be victorious. So, is our battle for faith just tomfoolery or a gallant skirmish? This battle lasts longer even than the Thirty Years War because here it is not fought only to conquer, but goes on relentlessly for self-preservation. Conscious that the intellect can despair, faith springs victoriously ahead of inner passion... To be seated calmly on a ship during good weather is not a picture of faith; but when there is a crack in the hull, and you are keeping the ship in working order with the help of pumps, and you are remaining enthusiastic and not trying to return to port, that is a picture of faith... While the intellect is like a passenger in despair vainly reaching out towards dry land, deep down, faith works with all its energy: joyfully and triumphantly, it will save the soul in spite of the intelligence...”¹

This passage from the philosopher Kierkegaard is marked by his own particular radicalism, and in some lines by his own conceptions of faith that can come close to fideism. Yet the picture that he gives of the ship is not without ideas to learn from. In some lines, we are reminded of present day conditions when we reflect on faith. The same Danish philosopher tells another anecdote that is worth mentioning. Once, in a

¹ S. KIERKEGAARD, *Post scriptum aux Miettes philosophiques*, Paris 1948, 148.

circus in Denmark, a fire broke out. The owner immediately sent a clown, who was dressed up and ready for the performance, into town to ask for help and to warn the people. He went as commanded and in a loud voice, called the people together to ask for their collaboration. Unfortunately, when the people saw him dressed as a clown, they presumed it was a strategy to get them to attend the show, so they responded to his cries with roars of laughter. They all admitted that the clown was good, and when he ended up with tears in his eyes begging them to save themselves, they laughed even louder. Meanwhile the fire destroyed the circus and the flames reached the village. The people were not prepared, so great damage was done.²

Sometimes a comparison with the clown can be felt in situations where one wishes to start a conversation on basic problems of the Christian life. There is certainly a need here to insert a conversation on the theology of faith.

In order to reflect on faith it is necessary to consider some objective difficulties that impede its immediate acquisition.

1. CONTEXT

It cannot be denied that nowadays we are faced with forms of culture that depend on a partial view of “modernity”, and that have acquired extreme forms of subjectivism at the expense of a unified reading of knowledge. The predominance of subjectivism is accepted by Christians, not only in their way of thinking, but more and more often in their behaviour until it becomes a way of life. Therefore it becomes increasingly more difficult to point out the limitations and contradictions because it is increasingly more difficult to perceive the dangers. This situation has led to various manifestations of loneliness, which is unfortu-

² Quoted by A. COX, *La città secolare*, Florence 1968, 247.

nately notably present nowadays, and has brought about the conception of faith as a private affair. There is nothing more dangerous for Christian faith because it is in essence *a community affair*. If reference to Church is removed, faith has no more reason for existence, because it omits the subject that proclaims and proposes the very object of belief: Jesus Christ who reveals the mystery of the Triune God.

Although it may seem paradoxical, there is now accepted in some countries, even at the linguistic level, something that is a semantic contradiction: “unchurched Christian”. This is absurd. There is no Christian faith without the Church. If one cannot submissively follow the Church that can be seen, it is hard to see why one should surrender oneself to someone who cannot be seen.

The appeal to one’s own conscience is one of the most sacred elements defended by Christian doctrine. However, it is subjected to a series of ambiguities that lead to misguided judgment. When the conscience is only marginally nourished by faith and essential elements are not included, and as it is subjected to a bombardment of differing ideological demands, it will live in confusion and never be free in its discernment.

The growth of subjectivism affects the topic of truth.³ It is not possible to deal with all facets of the problem here, but we will point out that we are living in a situation where opinion prevails over truth. Cultural efforts that have deeper roots, as they derive from a distrust of reason in arriving at the truth, are far more open to tolerance. With the wrong idea of truth, each one holds on to their own acquisitions. Each one’s truth is equally valid to that of many others and no one can be allowed to claim to possess the ultimate and definitive truth.

Such situations have in some ways precluded a more direct impact with the world of faith. They relegate faith to a private experience so that these individuals cut themselves off from access to prescriptive

³ Cf. *Fides et ratio*, nn. 45-48.

truth. The inheritance of the Enlightenment continues undisturbed to deceive us today with the claim that knowledge possessed by the individual is the source of all knowledge, and this has imprisoned other questions in the closet that are no less fundamental for personal knowledge, on the truth of knowledge given by faith.

If there is no such thing as absolute truth, then there is justification for today's behaviour that can mostly be identified as *religious indifference*.⁴ This is a real scourge in the West and is a certain prelude to atheism. It begins by giving up religious practice because it is regarded as useless or incomprehensible, and then it affects moral behaviour. Several causes of indifference can be identified. What has been observed, unfortunately, is that more and more often, what goes for religion is really a bad substitute, and even religious education, so necessary for real choice to be made, is relegated to being one of the least important things in life. Everything, in one way or another, seems to be known and everything becomes "obvious". Very often, this conceals situations where knowledge of the contents of faith are reduced to the bare minimum. For many believers life is separated from faith: at work, in society, in politics and in private life, they live as if God did not exist. Faith becomes a private affair.

In addition to this, another difficulty is the weariness that can be seen towards any kind of reflection connected with questions of faith. A pragmatic mentality has taken the place of the reflection and thought of previous years. It seems that we have reached the point where it is impossible to formulate new forms of knowledge, to the extent that speculative thought is drifting towards the formulation of a "weak code of values". The transfer from this kind of cultural dimension to forms of behaviour that are its normal consequence is obvious. The individual, leaving aside all contact with the inner life and all the problems it

⁴ For some general ideas on this problem, see A. CHARRON, "Indifferenza religiosa" in DTF 593-603.

entails, whether about personal identity or projection for the future, gets carried away with the disjointedness of solutions that satisfy for an instant but leave open the basic question on the meaning of one's own existence.⁵

We should consider one final characteristic: the inability to make definitive decisions. By being content with details that can only satisfy for an instant, cultural forms have arisen that dazzle by their brevity, obscuring the permanent and regarding it as unproductive. The crises in marriage and vocational choices arise from this scenario. The inability to discover the real grounds for faith and the lack of will to carry anything to completion, have brought about a return to kinds of magic hidden under the name of religiosity. Never before as in these times so conditioned by technology, have there been so many people addicted to different kinds of horoscopes, magic or sectarian and narrow forms of religion.

This panorama does not take away from the fact that there are real forms of concrete engagement and awareness that can be seen everywhere. I just want to show how young people today live in contradictory situations, independent of whether it depends on them or not. The cultural context in which one lives does not allow for a clear reception of the theological teaching of faith. This is due to the lack of a cultural sub-structure that should facilitate consistent communication of information and its reception.

2. TO CONSTRUCT THE BUILDING OF FAITH

Once we verify the difficulties standing in the way of receiving the contents of faith in their entirety, it is necessary to make a brief synthesis of the constituent elements of faith. "Faith is the *assurance* of all things

⁵ Cf. *Fides et ratio*, n. 6.

hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (*Heb.* 11:1). This definition given by the author of the *Letter to the Hebrews*, is the most coherent and meaningful synthesis of faith. In one stroke, it gives the essence of all that constitutes Christian faith. Each phrase used in this sentence is full of meaning and could be dealt with at length. First of all, it says that faith is the foundation; this indicates that it is the origin and basis of all hope. Without a foundation, existence would be without any reference and could neither grow nor acquire a personal identity. The author of the *Letter* immediately adds “of all things hoped for”, object of Christian hope and assurance of the *salvation* given by Jesus Christ. The relationship between faith and hope helps to verify the dynamism and progression of belief. It does not remain in the present only, but is oriented towards the fullness of the final and definitive moment of encounter with Almighty God. It says that this is the “conviction” of things not seen, and this indicates the fact that with faith come signs that guarantee the fulfilment of the promise.

After these words of introduction, chapter 11 of the *Letter to the Hebrews* recalls a long series of men and women who have witnessed to their faith with their lives “looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith” (12:2). We count ourselves among the ranks of the believers who, for the past two thousand years, have professed our faith in his resurrection. Faith is the link between generations of people from every place and every period of history and the most diverse backgrounds, who claim to base their existence on the words of the teacher from Nazareth.

Is it possible to describe the nature of faith? Holy Scripture guides us with the word *obedience*. The most significant phrase is found in a letter of the apostle Paul: “But how can they call upon the one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in the one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can they preach if they are not sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news!’ But, they have

not all heeded the gospel; for Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who have believed what they have heard from us?’ So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ” (*Rm* 10:14-17). Translation does not allow us to grasp the semantic originality of the Greek which says: *η πίστις εξ ακοής!* In this phrase, the apostle plays on the double meaning of the word *shema* which can be translated as “listen” or “obey”. His meaning is clear, though, and is fully expressed in the cross reference between the two verbs: faith consists of *listening* to the word preached and from this listening comes *obedience* to God; and, vice versa, obedience to God entails listening to his word.

The wealth hidden in the act of faith is easily seen from the semantic value expressed in the Scriptures. Hebrew actually possesses a range of terms that describe the concept of believing. The most consistent term comes from the root ‘*aman*’ which indicates “to be staunch”, “stable”, “sure”. To this root other words are attached that integrate and make explicit the same concept, like: “to take shelter”, “to trust”, “to find refuge”, terms used in the Psalms to express the attitude of a pious and religious person. To these we can add the idea of “to hope” and “to wait” that are no less important. The nuances contained in these words can be confirmed by the attitude of individuals in the Bible that can be of “fear”, “wonder”, “faithful abandon”, or “veneration”. Although the term “to believe” in common usage means to depend on someone who offers some kind of guarantee (*Gen* 45:26), when it refers to Yahweh it conveys the idea of total and faithful abandon in him, because he is seen to be a faithful, but jealous, God.

Throughout the biblical tradition, the classic example of faith is always in reference to the behaviour of *Abraham* which sums up the distinguishing marks of biblical faith. In *Gen* 15:1-21, and especially in the interpretation Paul gives it in *Rm* 4:18-25, we find the three characteristics that are the key to understanding the concept of faith in the Old Testament: complete and total *trust* that Yahweh will fulfil his promises, *obedience* of Abraham to the words and the command he receives, and

finally, *awareness* that God is present in the events of his life. Abraham believed that God would send him descendants in spite of Sarah's advanced years. He believed and abandoned himself to the word of God, but at the same time, he was fully convinced that the promise would be fulfilled.

In the Old Testament, knowledge of God and his involvement in the events of the world are known through faith. With faith, the truth of God's words are recognised and his promise seen to be fulfilled. The people abandon themselves to God in unshakeable obedience knowing that the God of Israel is a faithful God. To believe, therefore, is not something isolated from the rest of life and regarded as a theory of existence. On the contrary, it is a basic attitude of trust and certainty that engages the whole existence of the one who believes. A passage that expresses this at its highest point is controversial from the exegetical point of view, but is a classic in the theology of faith. It is from Isaiah 7:9, "If you will not believe, surely you shall not be *established*". In one stroke, the prophet shows that the essence of faith is to be "rooted" completely in the Lord. It is not by chance that the Septuagint, the Greek version, translates this passage as, "If you do not believe, you will not understand". So, life has no sense without faith.

The *New Testament* later went into these ideas in more depth making them more concrete, and bringing us forward to the incarnation of the Word. Even by simply counting the number of times the words "faith" or "believe" are used (about 240 times), shows the high value given to it by New Testament theology. The reminder to be "ready", "patient", "vigilant" in faith and to have hope, expresses the unified religious position that gives a decisive direction to life. In the many formulas found in the various sacred authors, the act of believing is most often expressed as *to accept the preaching of Jesus of Nazareth*. The various passages that correspond, for example in Acts (2:14-36; 3:12-26; 4:8-12; 5:29-32; 8:5-35; 9:20-22; 10:34-43; 13:16-41; 17:1-3; 18:5 ...), that report the preaching of Peter, Philip and Paul, show clearly that to

believe is an act through which, after listening to the preaching of the apostles who proclaimed the fulfilment of the promise, one accepts to live in accordance with that message.

How can we verify from this quick look at the Bible that, in Scripture, to “believe” is to take a definite position. It actually implies to “recognise”, “welcome”, “see”, “hear”, and “listen”. This one word expresses a particular way of knowing related to mystery and understood for what it is. It can be seen in a personal encounter with the Lord in which the whole person is committed: intelligence, will, self-understanding and judgement.

3. A FUTURE FULL OF MEANING

Is it now possible to identify some perspectives on which to work so that catechesis and learning about the faith in general can recover the wealth of theological reflection that exists? There are some avenues, in our opinion, that should be explored.

1. The first would be to regain the *reasons for belief*. Without this dimension we are building on sand because there will be less and less certainty about choices we make. Especially in a context like ours, it is necessary for each one to be able to respond to the question, “why do I believe?” without hesitation or ambiguity, but in the certainty of having made a choice that has given meaning to existence, without which we could have no horizons.

We need to proceed from here and think again about the *grounds for credibility* in the Christian faith. In this context, the problem of *meaning*, in our opinion, is the first that should be tackled. Our contemporaries in any part of the world are searching, almost frantically, for a meaning to give to life. It is difficult to find. In this search they find beautiful phrases that attract them and affect them positively, but the inability to connect beauty with understanding and explanation impedes

them from continuing. They abandon the path as soon as the emotional part has passed. The easiest way to proceed seems to be to join an esoteric group or fall into the arms of unscrupulous magicians who only know how to mislead but do not offer a meaningful response. We must recognise, with sincerity, that this kind of situation implies our co-responsibility in not having known how to “manifest the true face of God”⁶ from the moment when our contemporaries could not perceive the fresh meaning of the Gospel or what the Church has to offer them.

The sense and meaning of the basic questions presented by life do not find a response if they are kept to ourselves. It can only be done if we have the courage to open our eyes and see the presence of God in our times. At the moment when Christian faith gives an answer to the search for meaning, God the Father reaches out to each one. One of the most significant passages of the *Apostolic letter* of Pope John Paul II expresses it clearly: “In Jesus Christ God not only speaks to human individuals but also *seeks them out*. The Incarnation of the Son of God attests that God goes in search of the human person... If God goes in search of the human person, created in his own image and likeness, he does so because he loves each one”.⁷

This perspective favours the understanding of one of the fundamental points for a theology of faith: *the pre-eminence of faith*. God’s search for each one is marked from the beginning by freedom and love. Nevertheless, this comes up against the possibility of a refusal on the part of the person. There is absolutely no way of adequately understanding faith without recalling that it is God who first reaches out to each one. The first mention of the internal action of grace comes in the prophets Jeremiah and Ezechial and is developed further in the theology of Paul and John. The action of grace in us allows us to recognise the gift of a “new heart” or, to use Jeremiah’s expression, “a heart capable of knowing God” and

⁶ *Tertio millennio adveniente*, 36.

⁷ *Ibidem*, 7.

thus be able to come back to him (*Jer* 24:7; *Ez* 16:60, 62; 37:26). We find the same idea in the New Testament. A typical example is the phrase used when recounting the story of the conversion of Lydia: “The Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul” (*Acts* 16:14). To “open the heart” means that the light of the Spirit is working and, in just one action, allows the revelation of God to be understood.

2. A second avenue to follow is the rediscovery of the *centrality of Jesus Christ*. As the Pope wrote in his message for World Youth Day: “Let us walk in the footsteps of Christ”. Christian faith is not based on an idea, but on a person. This is decisive, because it implies adhesion to a life project that is not separate from him, but that finds the full answer in him. This is the moment of faith that can recognise what is in the heart. The faith we profess is *christian*. This adjective differentiates it from other religions and makes it stand out for its unicity and fulfilment. The centrality of the person of Jesus is the most significant dimension of faith because it is to believe that Jesus Christ is the ultimate revelation of the Father and the mystery of the Trinity, the conclusion of the path to faith and the ultimate praise that is raised in the liturgy.

The first professions of faith that we find in the New Testament come down basically to the declaration: “Jesus is the Christ”. This indicates that Jesus is the fulfilment of the ancient promise. God has spoken through him. The same concept comes in the constitution on Revelation in Vatican II: “The deepest truth about God and the salvation of humankind shines out for our sake in Christ ... To see Jesus is to see His Father (*John* 14:9). For this reason Jesus perfected revelation by fulfilling it through his whole work of making Himself present and manifesting Himself: through His words and deeds, His signs and wonders, but especially through His death and glorious resurrection from the dead and final sending of the Spirit of truth”.⁸

⁸ *Dei verbum* 2, 4.

From this same perspective, we should see how faith in Jesus Christ helps understand the mystery that each of us faces when asking the fundamental questions about existence. A rereading of the detailed account in number 22 of *Guadium et Spes* would show the part played by Pope John Paul II himself in relating the two components. He was then a young auxiliary bishop of Cracow and at the time of the commission meeting in Ariccia he had just been nominated archbishop. If you do not want to go back so far, it is sufficient to see the vision he has of humankind that emerges from his frequent interventions, and especially from his encyclicals, to understand that it is not at all possible to become estranged from God's initial plan: "Only in the mystery of the incarnate Word, the perspective from Christian anthropology is opened to full comprehension, because God shows that he created through the Son and that in him everything returns to God's original design from which we originated.

3. There is a third track that I regard as important in order to respond to the predominance of subjectivism and for the regaining of an awareness of *ecclesiality*. Without the Church we do not exist, because it is not possible to imagine a Christian outside the Body of Christ. It would be an amorphous situation without life. The predominance of subjectivism, which we mentioned before, can be reduced as long as there is a culture being formed that can recover the sense of belonging to the Church.

The Christian community is not an emotional palliative, but a constituent dimension of faith. The act of believing is not expressed only by "I believe", but at the same time by a "we believe". What we profess is not private property, but is the substance of existence of a community. Together with the community, a definitive choice to adhere to Christ is made, because in baptism one becomes a full member of the Church. The apostle Paul has clear teaching on this when he writes: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live in faith in the Son of God,

who loved me and gave himself for me” (*Gal 2:20*). Faith becomes part of this outlook on life. The “I” becomes a “we” and it finds no further meaning outside this. For a believer, to become a “person” takes place when a life choice leads one to enter a relationship with God and to opt for him, accepting him as the ultimate goal.⁹

In a way, these words are the echo of an even order message expressed by John who always underlined the “we the Church” dimension of faith: “That which was from the beginning, which *we* have heard, which *we* have seen with our eyes, which *we* have looked upon, and touched with *our* hands, concerning the Word of life; — the life was made manifest, and *we* saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us — that which *we* have seen and heard *we* proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us: and *our* fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And *we* are writing this that *our* joy may be complete” (*1 Jn 1:1-4*).

TO CONCLUDE:

MEMORISATION FOR TRANSMISSION AND FOR PREVENTION OF AMNESIA

The sense of belonging to the Church implies awareness that faith lives through transmission within a tradition that brings us to Christ. In this light we understand the motives behind the calls of different Fathers of the Church to the faithful insisting that they memorise the symbols of faith. Rufinus claimed that this was a direct instruction from the Apostles: “The Twelve decided that such norms should not be put in writing of any kind but such should be retained by memory so that it would be certain that no one had taken it from a written text”.¹⁰

⁹ For an extended discussion on this topic, cf. R. FISICHELLA, “Ecclesialità dell’atto di fede” (The ecclesial dimension of the act of faith), in IDEM, *Noi crediamo. Per una teologia dell’atto di fede*, Roma 1993, 59-97.

¹⁰ RUFINUS, *Explanation of the Creed*, 2.

The deeper significance of this is clear: the contents of faith should be written on the heart even more than in the mind of Christians. In this way, it remains as a constant memory because it comes from faith and as a song of praise to the Father for the gift of this grace. The words of Saint Augustine in this context are still meaningful: “The words expressing symbols should never be written for the purpose of learning them by heart, but should be memorised after hearing them only. Neither should they be written after being learned, but should be preserved in memory and thus brought to mind”.¹¹

Faith, therefore, comes from ongoing transmission that is listened to, and cannot be interrupted. It is a transmission made strong in the missionary call of the Church sent by the Lord to bring the Gospel to the whole world and to every creature (*Mt* 28:19-20). The Church can never tire of travelling the roads of the earth sharing with those who have not yet heard, the proclamation of the truth that takes humanity to true personal identity. Faith is not a vague sentiment that comes from within, nor is it a generic way of engagement that occurs to someone because it makes them feel good. It is, rather, the full, total and unre-served response to Christ who calls us to be his disciples in order to be perfect. Through this profession of faith, the martyrs have given their witness, and at the same time have shown to each of us the main path that every true disciple of Christ should follow.

We can find no better conclusion to this reflection than the words of Saint Ambrose in this treatise on *Exposition of the Symbol*. It will help us understand why even today Christians base their existence on that which is essential and not ephemeral: “This symbol is a spiritual seal. It is the meditation of our heart and is its ever present defence. Without any doubt it is the treasure we keep in our hearts”.¹²

The act of faith we are called to make and with which we give our-

¹¹ AUGUSTINE, *Discourse* 212.

¹² AMBROSE, *Exposition of the Symbol*, 1.

selves fully to God, with wholehearted consent, is always a risk that requires courage. Pascal says with passion: “Yes, it is necessary to take risks; that is not really optional... What evil could happen to you? You will be faithful, honest, humble, grateful, good, trustworthy friends, truthful... I tell you that you will gain in this life; and that, at each step you take on that path, you will have no doubt that you are gaining and that you are risking nothing at all, and you will recognise that you have gambled on something certain and infinite for which you have given nothing”.¹³ We too have the same challenge to accept today.

It is strange when you discover the most important aspects of life can be reduced to one word.

Accustomed as we are to receiving a constant flow of information, the multiplicity of words seems to have become a necessary condition in order to make oneself understood. The essential, on the other hand, is contained in one word. Believe, love, forgive in one instant, these words sum up an entire life and its meaning.

“Lord, I believe” (*Jn* 9:38). This simple phrase sums up the whole of Christian faith. It says, above all, *invocation*, that which shows the act of abandonment in Jesus Christ. At the same time, it indicates *love* for him, *hope* that rests on the act of salvation, and complete *trust* in this word. “Lord, I believe”, is the base on which existence is built and the direction in which we want it to go. It is all contained in an “amen”, and the semantic roots of this word express abandonment in faith as well as solid as a rock. Even in this case, one word sums up the full sense of the idea being expressed: to build life on a rock where nothing and no one can ever dislodge it. The parable of Jesus where he tells us not to build a house on sand but on rock (cf. *Mt* 7:24), exactly describes faith. It is built on the certainty of the love of God that does not let us down.

¹³ B. PASCAL, *Pensées*, 233.

3. The impact faith can have on life¹

ERNESTO OLIVERO

Founder of SERMIG (Youth Missionary Service)

Turin, Italy

I prepared a lecture for this morning, but I'm not going to read it. While I was at Mass with you, I experienced once again that the best moments are those spent in silence. In silence you cannot lie, and so, during Mass, I remembered some occasions that were extremely important for me.

For example, once when I was in South America, a group of street children wanted to rob me. I said to myself: "mamma mia!" if I allow myself to be robbed by street children, I'll be ruined. I'll lose my credibility. The Pope said I should be a faithful friend to all the abandoned children in the world. What will they think of me then?

They had located the money in my right-hand pocket. I dodged them and ran away and managed to remove the money and put it into my shoe. When I turned back, they said to me: "But, you are one of us!" So they accepted me and we began to talk.

Once there was a little girl who didn't speak to anyone because she didn't trust people. She only spoke to animals. I told her about my dog Tobia. She must have been thinking, if he has a dog for a friend, then I can speak to him.

If you come to the Arsenale in Turin,² and if you have any heart, I think you won't be surprised that millions of people come to us. You won't be surprised that we are the largest group in the world that has

¹ Text transcribed from the recording.

² Headquarters of Servizio Missionario Giovani.

been able to carry out 1,400 development projects without a penny from the “powers that be”, but that it was thanks to over a quarter of a million poor people and young people like you. You won’t be surprised to hear that we have a very large music academy. Perhaps you will be surprised to see that the sparrows and pigeons are not afraid to be near us. Whoever meets Jesus does not frighten anyone, not even animals.

And when, in a far country, a child would not let anyone hug him, I realised that he was afraid of men because they had often abused him. Do you know how I managed to reach him? We played football, and I jumped on him from behind the way you do in football. He could experience that this kind of touching was all right. Then we could talk.

Some years ago, I met one of the greatest philosophers of modern times. He is a non-believer. How can you dialogue with a non-believer? Impossible!

He asked me this question: “How did you come to meet Jesus? Is there any writer, author, saint who inspired you?” I answered: “I never read any books about Jesus. I just read through the Bible five or six times a year. That is my real prayer. However, there isn’t really much about Jesus in the Bible”.

“Then how did you get to know him?”

“At a certain stage in my life I said: Jesus, if you exist, take me. And do you know, from that moment the word ‘hate’ could not enter my heart. The word ‘racism’ disappeared, and the word ‘enemy’ disappeared. Do you know, from that moment I discovered that there were 24 hours in a day and I should live them in this way. From that moment my money was no longer mine. Oh, that Jesus really got me!”

From that time he began to look at me differently. I think Jesus is going to get him too. Every person is a child of God.

So, how do you make faith influence a person’s life?

If you had met me when I was small, you would have asked me, “what will you be when you grow up? I would have answered, ‘Look, I failed at school thirteen times, – really, I’m a phenomenon –, so I’ll never

be a writer, for example. I'm timid – really! – so I'll never speak in public. I'm scared of flying, so I'll never go up in a plane. and so I'll never go abroad. I don't want to meet any poor people because I'm too timid”.

Hasn't my life changed! This year alone, I've flown eighty-five times. I've given thousands of speeches all over the world, and I never once read the text I'd prepared. How did this happen?

Because Jesus takes you as you are, and if you are willing, he lets you become what you want to be.

I was timid, so I would never have gone to speak to prisoners, and much less to prostitutes. So, how did I do it? At the beginning I said: I will help the poor without meeting them. I'll give money to missionaries and associations and they will know what to do with it. I don't want to meet the poor because I am afraid.

That's how it began. When did the turning point come? It was in Turin when we organised a meeting and thirty thousand people came and they wanted to hear me. Well, I spoke, and they didn't boo, so perhaps I managed to say something. But when I got home, something was telling me that my life was changing. If I didn't want to betray the gift that Jesus had given me, I would have to change. I would have to have young people around to influence me, and I would have to pray many hours a day. *Mamma mia*, I'm crazy, I thought. I don't know if I have managed to change, but maybe I have.

When one receives a gift, either one looks the other way, or one gets scared and runs to Jesus.

I am the founder of a community that has managed to do many things. Have you ever heard of a founder who, in the prime of life, says to the youngsters, “Imagine that I'm dead. So, take responsibility”. One girl in our Community is like Mother Teresa of Calcutta. A boy who was a member of one of the most extremist groups in Italy became a great biblical scholar. A heart of faith is contagious, but if you want to spread the faith, never say, “I am a person of faith”.

I am a person of fear. I am a person of timidity. I am a person who

doesn't know what to say. That is why I couldn't sleep last night, like thousands of other nights, asking myself, "Lord, what am I to say to those friends that you want me to meet tomorrow?" And this morning he said to me, "Don't read the speech you've prepared!".

If there is faith, there is action. In a very intense conversation with my non-believer friend, he said to me, "If you have faith and I don't, we can't dialogue". I said, "Perhaps faith is a gift – perhaps. But good faith is a choice for everyone to make, believers and non-believers – those who believe they don't believe. Remember that Jesus, at the end of your life, will not judge you on whether you had faith or not. Otherwise you would be destined for hell. According to Matthew, you will be judged on whether you gave food to the hungry – and anyone can do that –, and if we have given hospitality to strangers".

We at SERMIG have perhaps one of the largest night shelters for foreigners, immigrants and poor people. So, how did we get into this kind of work?

We were at a big meeting for peace in unity with the Holy Father, and we were unlucky enough to have a huge placard saying, "Lord, if you wish, send me". That was our mistake! An immigrant stood up and changed the topic. He looked me in the face and said, "Have you somewhere to sleep tonight?" I thought to myself, "who is this nuisance?" Then he said to me, "Do you know that I have nowhere to sleep? Do you know that Turin has nowhere for anyone to sleep?"

I could have answered: Look, friend, I can't do everything. We already work for prisoners, alcoholics, AIDS victims. Our main work is to encourage youngsters to "change the world", to be holy, to be scientists, to be great musicians. We can't do everything.

However, I said nothing. I didn't answer. But that night, I went out to sleep on the streets of Turin. It is awful sleeping on the streets of Turin, or Calcutta, or Sao Paolo or Rome. I couldn't sleep because I was afraid. I slept rough for many nights. I learned what it was like for them. Then we started to offer them lodging. We didn't have place to put

them up, but now in Turin alone, every night, 220 people, men and women, sleep peacefully and safely.

You can only do good if faith takes first place every day. I will never call myself a “man of faith”. I think I have prayed for tens of thousands of hours, but today I have to read 20-30 pages of the Bible and I have to do a few hours of prayer. The more we have to do, the more we have to pray. If there is prayer, faith will take you wherever the Lord desires. The Lord won't condemn you because you're timid, weak or a sinner. On the contrary, if you give your heart to the Lord, each day he can work miracles.

So, starting with a handful a youngsters, we've been able to feed millions of people. At the end of the century there were bloody wars in many countries, from Lebanon to Iraq, and we have automatically always been there with those people.

When it looked as if everything was going to fall apart in Poland, I went to the Pope and said, “Your Holiness, would you be happy if I went to Walesa in Poland to bring help?” He answered, “It is impossible!” “No, just tell me if that is your wish”. Sometimes friendship – the fact of loving and respecting a person – reinforces our faith. He said, “yes”. I went to Cardinal Balestrero, archbishop of Turin, and he told me how to go. I can just about speak Italian, but anyway, I went to Poland with an articulated lorry filled with aid. I met a holy priest who accompanied me through some horrendous adventures, and I went to Walesa to convey the best wishes of the Holy Father and to hand over a huge amount of aid.

So, faith can be reinforced when we meet a friend and we overcome fear in order not to betray this friend. We have made a choice: never to let young people down. We will completely exhaust ourselves if that is what it needs to have their friendship, and we will never let them down.

That's how faith is constantly renewed. It is sensitive to the signs of the times. But the key is prayer.

4. Holiness: call and response*

Fr. JESÚS CASTELLANO CERVERA, OCD
Rector of Pontificio Istituto Teresium, Rome

After hearing the testimony given by Ernesto Olivero, we can be sure that there is holiness out there travelling the roads of the world. Holiness is alive and experienced in communion and service, and it is evident that the Holy Spirit is granting to our times the gift of people like Ernesto and his young people. They show us clearly that the Holy Spirit is renewing the Church for the third millennium.

Let us reflect for a while on Jesus as the Holy One, the Master and the Ideal to be followed. As we look at these three aspects, I would like them to be Jesus' answer to you so that you could then respond to him. What kind of holiness do we need in the third millennium that is just beginning? What can I say to you, young people of the world? I do not want to give my words only. I want to be able to present the face of Jesus to you. I want you to be able to contemplate his holy face. We have an icon here, Our Lady of Vladimir, where Jesus is a child in the arms of his mother, and he is already holy. He is the source of all holiness. The three aspects we are about to explore are related to the Church of today, the Jubilee that we are celebrating, and the words that the Holy Father frequently repeats to us.

THE HOLINESS OF INCARNATION

“The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14). This is not only a *kerigma*, an announcement. It is the certainty

* Text transcribed from the recording.

and experience of holiness. These words mean that holiness has become flesh. The Jews regarded holiness as something far away in heaven. Isaiah was transfixed before the God who is three times holy: “holy, holy, holy”. But with the Incarnation, the Word made flesh, holiness became ours and came closer. The Word was one of us and could be seen and felt and belonged to our earth. The Word took on our humanity to make it holy so that we too could clothe our humanity, its culture, feelings and heart, with the holiness of God. We will have indigenous saints, like our Ecuadorian friend who spoke yesterday. I hope that the third millennium will produce many young saints from all cultures and all nations, for Christ tells us today that holiness is to clothe our experience with the word of the Gospel and the mind of Jesus.

“*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us*”. As some of you have remarked, is it not wonderful to be able to say that Jesus has been the company and companion of humankind for two thousand years! Saint Teresa of Jesus used to say that Jesus in the Eucharist is our companion in the Blessed Sacrament. Jesus was our comrade long before the communists started using the term. For two thousand years we have not been living the “hundred years of loneliness” that a Colombian writer spoke of, but rather, two thousand years of companionship. We can see how Christ’s companionship among us has led to the flowering of holiness throughout the twenty centuries of life of the Church. This means that we cannot be holy if we are not companions in holiness and hold out our hand to others, to walk together, to look into another’s eyes, to encourage each other. Holiness today cannot be achieved by being alone. Holiness comes from groups, peoples, movements. We must be together to encourage each other on the road to holiness. This is why Jesus came to live among us. He became a pilgrim and pitched his tent and was with us while he lived. He did not abandon us to solitude because he is still among us telling us to follow in his footsteps and be holy as he is holy. We can say, in the words of John, that he is and continues to be “among us full of grace and truth”. Jesus has radiated holiness. He has brought it

close. He has clothed it with every colour of skin in the world. He has made it beautiful in all the vocations, holy martyrs, holy students of theology, holy simple people, holy workers, saints of all epochs. The company of Christ who is full of grace and truth draws us closer to holiness. Christ blended his divinity with our humanity, and now he blends our humanity with his divinity with the Gospel, with life and with the Eucharist.

So we see that holiness is possible because it is holiness in the flesh and in life, because it is holiness in the company of Jesus, and because he has radiated grace and truth for all. No one is excluded.

HOLINESS OF THE JUBILEE CHRIST

I think that the second aspect is very important. We are celebrating a jubilee. We celebrate this jubilee while remembering the jubilees of the Old Testament that were celebrated every fifty years. It was a special time for community and social holiness when even the land took part in the time of rest and holiness of God. But God could not wait for fifty years for people to decide to be holy, so he sent Jesus to us. Jesus came to do a daily jubilee, to be completely holy and live this holiness day after day, not just once in fifty years. If we depended on a holy year once every fifty years, some of us would spend our lives in sin waiting for a holy year in order to become holy. Jesus said that it could not be like that, so he made his life a jubilee, from the time he was born. He came to announce the definitive and everyday jubilee. This is important. He did so in the synagogue of his home town, Nazareth. He did so with the words that were read in front of the Holy Door when it was opened by the Holy Father in this jubilee year 2000. It is Christ who says, “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor*” (Lk 4:18-19).

I like to make Christians aware of the jubilee Christ, and I like to look at the life of Jesus in the light of jubilee holiness. In all that he is, in all that he does, in all that he says, have you ever thought that the jubilee that Christ lived daily is really living each day as the Son of God? He gives all that he has without reserve. He is a free person who gives all that he has and fills everyone with his gifts as he passes through this world. His possessions are given in full communion. He gives us his Father, his Spirit, his Mother, his Gospel. The jubilee Christ forgives us our sins. He sends the Holy Spirit and makes us happy. He proclaims the beatitudes and fill us with joy. He came to open the definitive and everyday jubilee and give himself fully even to the cross. He gave himself totally in order to give us everything. He held nothing back. This is the jubilee Christ, happy and free, who gives us his whole being and life and calls disciples to follow him and live as he did. They follow him, and the group of apostles is a group that lives the daily jubilee with Jesus and like Jesus, and not every fifty years. We cannot wait that long. We would grow old. Our youth would be spent without living each day like Jesus.

The community in Jerusalem understood this very well. The day after Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was in their hearts, they began to live like Jesus, living the gospel of love, giving everything, communicating everything, and the Acts of the Apostles tell us that there were no poor people among the disciples of Christ. As Ernesto told us, there are no poor when everything is shared. There are no strangers wherever we are all friends. There are no sinners and saints wherever we all belong to Jesus. This is what the community of Jerusalem learned to do each day.

We who have come together to celebrate Holy Year, must have this idea clear: Jesus, his jubilee life, joy, freedom and self-giving, teaches us to live the holiness of everyday life, a shared holiness. He does this so that no one will postpone it by saying: I will be holy next week or next month or on first Fridays. No. We need to say together: today. At the

end of time, as Ernesto said, in the evening of life, Saint John of the Cross said, we will be tested for our love, but not only on the last day, but today, every day. This is why we must help each other to live a jubilee life as Jesus did.

HOLINESS AS TRINITARIAN LIFE

The third aspect is short but important. For the past few years, Pope John Paul II has been speaking often about the trinitarian life of Christ, the Spirit and the Father. It was a joy for the whole Church to discover the original mystery of our faith and to live it. We can feel that we have a Father and that the Holy Spirit is present. Maybe you can remember Saint Peter's Square at Pentecost in 1998 when the Holy Spirit filled the Church with fervour. It was, as they said at the second Vatican Council, the Holy Spirit renewing the Church.

I really think that the second millennium put much emphasis on the "oneness" of God. We concentrated so much on the "oneness" that we forgot that God is love and communion; that He is a living burning flame; that He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit in communion. The concept of the oneness of God suited many people very well. There were so many absolutes, so many dictatorships, so much authoritarianism that people's idea of God was of a distant, high up God. Meanwhile, those men of this world divinised themselves in their own absolute humanism.

The God of the coming centuries will not be a lone and solitary God. He will be the triune God: the Father who is weakened by his love for his children because he pardons them all; the Son who is weakened by his incarnation and in his death on the cross, and through this we can despise no one but must love everyone. Vatican Council II declared that Christ, the Word of God, was united with every man and woman through his incarnation, we must now add that the Christ who died on the cross is united with every human person with all their limitations, the poor, the suffering, the migrant, and all

who feel different, so that no one should be without hope and all should meet in Christ. This is the weakness and this is the holiness of the children of God.

Christ on the Cross is the paramount and unsurpassed example of holiness. Christ assumes our limitations and empties himself totally in order to fill us with holiness. In him we can foresee the holiness of young people who learn to love, accept and accompany, never rejecting or despising anyone.

The immense weakness of the Holy Spirit is in our freedom and promotes our freedom. It seeks it out but does not replace it. History is slow because the Holy Spirit is awaiting our freedom and our response. What can we give to God that God does not have? Our freedom. God has made himself weak. God who is almighty is not completely almighty with us if we do not allow him to be almighty by giving him our freedom.

The holiness of the coming century will be a holiness of trinitarian communion, of the help we give to each other, of dialogue between cultures, young people, religions, people of good will, because all are born from the Trinity of love and all must return to this Trinity.

Therefore, we must cultivate a holiness of communion, of a people who help each other mutually. In this holiness there is room for everyone and no one is excluded. It is a holiness of dialogue, companionship, and it is attractive. In this holiness the unity of God is in the unity of our human nature. Here we all are one, and the Trinity of God speaks to us of diversity. This is not contradictory and does not cause a wall to be built. It is the capacity to accept each other so that we are all enriched with the gifts that others may have and that we do not possess.

I see the holiness of the new century as being a trinitarian holiness, one of communion and love, and one where young people participate in the trinitarian wealth of God in his unity and trinity, just like at World Youth Day. Here there is unity in love, an immense variety of languages, songs, gestures and faces. This holy Church filled with the triune God

will become more and more united in love, more catholic and more universal in the beauty of all cultures. These are my ideas on Jesus and trinitarian holiness.

A RESPONSE AND A COMMITMENT

What is our response? In brief, Jesus makes us holy if we allow him to enter. To give a graphic example: Michelangelo said that the art of sculpture is to remove all that is superfluous from a block of marble. Our holiness is achieved by allowing Jesus to remove all that is superfluous from us. We will not turn out as photocopies. There is no cloning involved in sanctification. We will be unique individuals and each one will give glory to God through their own holiness which is the holiness of God in us. This is why Jesus asks us to give our minds to him and think like him. This is pure Gospel. We must think of the Gospel as the best philosophy, the deepest psychology, the most genuine sociology.

Jesus asks for our hearts, the centre of our feelings. Things function or do not function according to the heart and who it belongs to. Jesus can ask us for our minds and hearts because he has given everything for our sake.

If we wish to be wise, we have the wisdom of the Gospel. If we wish to be emotionally mature, let us love Christ and all that is from Christ, then the heart cannot become small when there are so many brothers and sisters to love. Let us give our lives to Christ and everything we do, big and small, whatever we do in life, whether we are teachers, students, workers, we give to Christ the life that he asks us for. "I give you my life; give me your life". Jesus asks us to respond. Give your life so that Christ will live in you.

So, why don't we make a pact among ourselves? If we wish to be the saints of the new century, let us live united in the words of the Gospel that we hear every day at Mass. Let us be invested with the Gospel of Jesus. Let us be united in this same Bread of Life that nour-

ishes the whole family of the children of God. Christ makes us one and makes each one a unique expression of his holiness. Let us live united in love for one another so that the world will be inflamed with the witness of the children of God who love one another with a pact of love and mercy, in a world without nations because there is only the one family of God.

Let us pray very much for each other, because prayer is the best *internet* ever invented. With the *prayer internet* we can communicate with the whole world. We are one body, one family, disciples of Jesus, and the splendour of his holiness in the Church today.

5. Faith: a gift to share

Dr. TIMOTHY O'DONNELL

Dean of Christendom College, USA

I am deeply honored to be here with you today to share some reflections concerning our common faith, but more concretely, to focus upon sharing the gospel in the new millennium.

How important it is for all of us to read the signs of the times. T.S. Eliot, the great Anglican poet, wrote back in 1930 in his work, “Thoughts After Lambeth”:

The world is trying the experiment of attempting to form a civilized but non-Christian mentality. The experiment will fail, but we must be very patient in awaiting its collapse, meanwhile redeeming the time; so that the Faith may be preserved alive through the dark ages before us; to renew and rebuild civilization, and save the world from suicide.

As we know, God created all things by wisdom and love. The world as created by God was ordered and “very good”, as the book of Genesis tells us.

Down through the centuries great works of Catholic art and architecture have sought to capture and communicate this profound truth.

One can think of Phillip II's glorious palace and church at El Escorial, St. Peter's Basilica here in Rome, the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, or Chartres cathedral in France. The Cathedral of Chartres communicates this truth not only in stone, but in the glory of stained glass, which makes use of heavenly light. This heavenly light was the first gift of God's creative act as recorded in the book of Genesis. The South Rose at Chartres, which depicts Christ in the center sitting on an emerald throne surrounded by angels, evangelists, and the 24 elders, is a vision

of heavenly order which is reflected in the cosmos. I recall being overwhelmed by this window the first time I saw it. Below the rose, in the lancet windows, we find Mary holding Christ and the four Hebrew prophets carrying the four evangelists on their shoulders. How beautifully these windows capture the sentiments of St. Irenaeus:

The glory of God is man fully alive; moreover man's life is the vision of God: if God's revelation through creation has already obtained life for all the beings that dwell on earth, how much more will the Word's manifestation of the Father obtain life for those who see God (*Against Heresies*, 4, 20, 7, p. 7/1, 1037).

During the First and Second World Wars, the glass at Chartres was carefully taken out for protection and was carefully put back into place after each war.

Our faith tells us that before the fall, Adam and Eve possessed the shining glory of the image and likeness of God. Rabbi Simon used to teach that before the Fall, "Adam's heel shone like the sun!" The good Rabbi would then challenge his students to "imagine what his face must have been like" for he and his wife were clothed in glory.

That original sin was so horrible that it was as if a bomb had hit Chartres Cathedral and shattered that once brilliant glass into a million broken, jagged pieces. Adam exchanged the radiant light of glory for sewn fig leaves.

Our Faith teaches us that we live in a world which is good, but fallen. We have lost that glory and order in our lives and we have become broken and shattered. We have lost integrity and that sense of tranquillity, of peace and order, which comes from having everything in its proper place. This stems from the fact, as the Catholic Catechism teaches, that "man preferred himself to God and by that very act scorned Him" (CCC § 398). The shattered glass of our disordered lives can cut very deeply if not put back properly.

Many good things in creation can be twisted by our disorder. For example, technology can be a great good and can help bring people

together, improve the quality of life, and assist medical science to advance healing and alleviate pain and suffering. It can also be used to create weapons of mass destruction, to manipulate man and to destroy innocent human life. Another example is sexual love, which is good and can be holy. It can be a great blessing expressing the unitive act of self donation in marriage which leads to a fruitful cooperation with God in bringing forth new life. What a joy it is to see the fruit of that union enfleshed in a child. How sad it is that so many couples have bought into the lie that they should wait before cementing their union in this way. We must also remember that the sexual drive can become disordered and an obsession which tyrannizes and seduces, leading to obsessive and compulsive behaviour in addiction to pornography, which poisons all human relationships and can destroy the innocence of children.

With Christ we have someone who can help us to put the pieces back together again in the proper order. With our Lord we can begin once again to be clothed with “power and glory from on high” (*Acts* 24:49). Each and every human being is called individually to this glorious destiny to become sons and daughters of God. This we know by faith, that if we follow this destiny we will one day see Him as He is, in the glory of a face to face vision.

The modern world in many ways is like the young man seeking discipleship in the Gospel, “who went away sad” for he had many possessions (*Mk* 10:17-22). He “went away sad” for there was no room for Christ’s word to take root in him. Rather than possessing his possessions, he himself was possessed by his possessions. The effort to build a civilization without Christ has led to aimlessness, despair, fear of family break-up, and a woundedness and brokenness, which seeks, particularly in the affluent West, to hide the fear and emptiness with drugs, sex, noise, endless amusement in the pursuit of frivolity, or consumerism. But we must remember as faithful Christians, We Have Christ!

A good friend once quoted to me a Jewish Rabbi who said, “A student should be covered with the dust of his rabbi”. All of us, each and

everyone is called to have the heart of a disciple and to become “Christ’s ambassadors” (2 Cor 5:20). All of us are to have a heart like Christ, for our Lord alone answers the deepest questions of the human heart.

The faith that we have been given is such a gift and sadly, we do not reflect often enough upon these fundamental truths of our Faith. Faith can be simply understood as “the assent of the mind to what God has revealed”. As St. Thomas teaches, supernatural faith requires divine grace either sanctifying, actual or both, as the intellect assents under the influence of the will which also requires its own assistance of grace in order to make the individual ready to believe. This scholastic understanding of faith shows us that we are surrounded by the gifts of His love, swimming in a sea of grace.

How important it is today, in this secular, agnostic age, to make explicit acts of faith. Each of us should pray daily, “My God I believe in You and all that Your Church teaches, because you have said it, and your word is true!” You must, as young Catholics, confess before the world your faith in Christ Jesus and His cross, which is our *spes unica* – our one hope! My dear young people, in this Jubilee Year, like Janus who guarded the old Roman Forum you face two directions. You look back to the past century in which you were born, and look forward to the new.

Let us first look back on this past century, a century of war, bloodshed and convulsions. G.K. Chesterton, the famous English convert and author, writing in *Christendom in Dublin* stated:

Lenin got it the wrong way round. The truth is that Irreligion is the opium of the people. Whenever the people do not believe in something beyond the world they will worship the world. But, above all, they will worship the strongest thing in the world. And by the very nature of modern systems, as well as by the practical working of almost any system, the State will be the strongest thing in the world (*Christendom in Dublin*).

Looking back on this century we have seen with radiant clarity what man can do, if he wishes to structure his life without God. We have seen him move away from Him who is the source of all goodness, and in many instances, set his heart like stone against Him.

It is interesting to note that our present age prides itself on its tenderness, its sensitivity, and its compassion, as superior to earlier times. It has sought periodically to use the suffering in the world in an effort to discredit the goodness of God, thereby denying Him, or at least making Him irrelevant, by obscuring the truth. For it is precisely His supreme goodness which attracts us to Him. With the illusion of our greater gentleness and compassion, we claim as one noted author tells us, along with Ivan Karamazov, “I can’t believe in God as long as one child is in torment”. This compassionate pity is strangely blind to the hidden massacre and slaughter of innocent little children in the womb, who are discarded as mere “products of conception”.

We are now seeking to govern and build a new civilization (as Elliot observed) based on a vague theory of mere human tenderness and compassion, divorced and cut off from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the source of all true love and tenderness. Our mere human tenderness and compassion, truly the daughter of the Enlightenment, has ended in this century in terror and compulsion. It has ended in Auschwitz, Dachau, the Gulag, the killing fields in Cambodia, or periodically in my own country when an unseemly little limb is seen protruding from a torn trash bag in a municipal dumpster. This little limb reveals to a temporarily disturbed populace the frightening reality of what is really, really involved in a “woman’s right to choose”.

As I tell my students at Christendom College, thank God everyday in humility that you are receiving as your patrimony an authentic Catholic education, grounded in the truths of the faith and right reason and have been taught the proper order of things, both natural and supernatural as found in Catholic wisdom. Above all else as Catholics you know how supremely important it is to believe in God, to hope in

God, to love Him with all your heart, to love your neighbour in Him. We have all seen the results in this past century of rejecting Him and substituting a vague earthly belief in humanity, hope in humanity, and compassion for humanity. We have all seen it. Our civilization in many ways has turned its back on God, abandoning His law. Once again the words of Christ have proven true: "Without Me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5).

All of us live in this miasma of disbelief and skepticism, which Sr. Regina spoke of movingly in her experience in France. Yet despite this difficulty, the world, fallen as it is, still hungers for truth and peace. This is why we must first be men and women of prayer, grounded and nurtured in Christ Jesus. We must be men and women strong in faith, for of course there can be no external peace without true interior peace. This interior peace is impossible without Christ. The first word of Christ in His ministry was, "Come! Come and see... and learn of me...". His lasts words were, "Go! Go out into the world." In other words, we must first be holy and grounded in Him. Only then do we go out to bring His saving truth to the world.

As we look to the future, I can think of no finer example than the one who has blessed us all in a special way. This one man who personally lived in the midst of the turmoil of much of this hellish 20th century. This man, who when raised by Divine Providence to the Throne of the Fisherman, cried out in his first words to a stunned world 22 years ago (and I remember them well for I was there), "*Non abbiate paura! Non abbiate paura*". Be not afraid.

This has also been a century of heroism and martyrdom, the seed of new life for the Church and our Faith. In the hellish fire of this century, the city of those who love God and one another, have in the mysterious designs of providence been fused and brought together through the experience of suffering. Just last year when our Holy Father returned to his beloved homeland, he beatified 108 of his countrymen martyred by the Nazi terror. These martyrs served, by

their heroic example of fidelity to Christ, as a bridge to a faith-filled future. One of them was a priest who would not deny Christ and was thrown into a cesspool of human waste and drowned, left alone and forgotten by his tormentors. Another was a young man who refused to trample on his rosary and was immediately shot and left forgotten. But the Church does not forget her own and reclaims them from the world and elevates them and all of us.

Christ, our dear and loving Saviour, never forgets the work of His hands, His friends. And how could we forget the great hero we celebrate today, St. Maximilian Kolbe. As these heroes teach us, our holy Catholic Faith, our faith in Jesus Christ and His Church is “the pearl of great price” (*Mt* 13:45-46). Your Faith supported by the unfailing grace of God is an immovable rock. In the midst of temporal storms and tempests it is “an anchor piercing the veil” (*Heb* 6:19), as the author of Hebrews tells us. It is an anchor which attaches us securely to our great High Priest who “always makes intercession for us” (*Heb* 7:25). What a consolation we have in our faith! This faith is a key which allows you to enter into the very joy of the Heart of God. It is a flaming torch of divine life, a burning sword which can enlighten those lost in darkness, dwelling in the shadows of the culture of death. Our faith can inflame the lukewarm and it can restore life to those dead in sin. What a divine gift! It must be shared in our homes, our schools, our businesses: for faith, like goodness itself, is diffusive. *Caritate Christi compulsi* – the love of Christ compels us.

St. Thomas tells us that grace builds on nature. It is my hope and prayer that the exuberant spirit of our young people will always draw its vitality from the Divine Wellspring. Let us remember that we are all young in Christ and that as the world grows old the Church remains forever young. The reason you should “not be afraid” as you look to the future, is because you have opened the doors to Christ by your faith in Him who said to us: “Fear not for I have overcome the world” (*Jn* 16:33). You have the faith which gives you joy, a joy no one can take

from you. It is a joy which is the fruit of faith and the gift of the Holy Spirit. I firmly believe that your gift of joy, so evident here at this gathering, is what will be so attractive to the men and women of the next century. Your joy will lead friends, associates, perhaps your spouse and children, to the Heart of the God-Man, that *fons totius consolationis* – the fountain of all consolation.

As Cardinal Newman once said:

The heart is commonly reached not through reason but through direct impression... The sight of belief in others is next to seeing yourself. Holiness embodied in personal form not in abstract proposition converts and holds the world to Christ. Its force is next only to that of the grace of God.

As Catholics, we must not only “talk the talk”, but “walk the walk”, or as St. Francis once said to his companions, “Preach the Gospel at all times. If necessary, use words”.

St. Thomas teaches that we only do well that which we do with joy. This supernatural joy of yours, the fruit of faith, will be so noticeable and compelling, especially in the crucible of suffering and difficulty. This joy in the midst of suffering, which inevitably enters into every life, especially the lives of those who seek to serve God and neighbour in joy, will truly be a powerful witness. A friend once told me of an American couple who had prayed fervently to God with all their heart that He would grant them their deep desire to have a child. After a lengthy time that prayer was heard and a child was born to them. The child, however, was severely handicapped, blind, deaf and almost completely paralysed, requiring constant, draining attention. This friend told me that he ran into this couple with their baby at Lourdes. After greeting them, he said quite understandably, “Oh, you’re here to seek a miracle of healing”. The mother just looked down, gently shook her head and said, “Oh, no”. She raised a face visibly suffused with joy and serenity and said with a gentle smile: “No. We have come here to thank God for the gift

and grace of our child. Without him we would never have grown so close to each other or to Christ”. You see, *con la fede... la vita è bella*, even in the midst of suffering.

Faith tells us that Christian joy is a direct result of Divine Love. St. Thomas teaches that joy is the condition and the result of our friendship with Christ. With our faith in Christ, the broken pieces of our lives can be put together again in the right order. Christ alone reveals the true love and compassion which can save us and our starving errant world. So many in our world, instead of being given the truth of Christ, are being fed with husks meant for swine, or are being presented with stones and scorpions, which the world gives as food for the soul.

Let us recall how our Lord’s Sacred Heart was moved to compassion by the world’s pain, for the sick, the blind, and those in the grip of demons. His Heart was moved by the world’s sorrow and the painful separation of death which is so much a part of our lives and human existence. How He longed to wipe the tear from every eye. He was moved by the world’s hunger and longed to give Himself as food for the world. He was also moved in His great Sacred Heart to compassion by the world’s loneliness, isolation and alienation. Even the sight of a leper in isolation moved His Heart to say: “I will it! Be thou made clean!” (Mt 8:3). He was moved to compassion by the world’s confusion. People today, despite secular hostility, are still hungry for God and His saving truth. It is only in the fullness of our Faith that we find that life itself has been answered. Only the fullness of our Faith, not half-truths, or the mediocrity of a pick and choose Catholicism, can satisfy the hunger and loneliness in the world. You know that everything we know about love psychologically and philosophically points to the truth of our faith and tells us that love always seeks union with the object loved. Whether the object of our love be directed to a good glass of red wine, a rich, spicy pasta or crepes suzette, we will seek to be united with it. For the Irish, it might be a thick, creamy Guinness!

The same is true of love directed to people, those we love. That is precisely why at special times in the year, such as Christmas or Easter, families make a point of coming together and being together. We all know that it's just not the same if someone is missing from that gathering. That is why when a young boy or girl falls in love, or gets zapped with what Plato called the "divine madness", they can spend hours on the phone talking; and when you ask them, as I have my own children, "What do you talk about for hours?", they just give you a silly, dazed smile and say, "Oh, I don't know, we just talk". What they really want is just to be together, to be present, really present to each other.

That's what our Lord wants to be, really present to His people. Our Lord wants to remain with them always. What a gift we have to share! Our God became one with us in a union so intimate that the two natures are united personally in one Divine Person, a union which the Church calls hypostatic.

The second thing we know about love, true love in this life, is that the language it speaks is that of suffering. True love always includes a willingness to suffer for the sake of the beloved, or else it is a false and counterfeit love. The problems of suffering and evil tormented the great St. Augustine, who wrote in his *Confessions*: "I sought whence evil comes and there was no solution" (*Confessions* 7,7,11: PL 32, 739). The great Doctor of Grace finally found the answer to this torment in our holy religion – in the Faith. So when the world asks us, as it will, does God care about pain and human suffering? Does He know? Does He know what it's like to have cancer, to have brain tumours or agonizing, recurring migraines, where you can't bear the pain in your head? Does He know what it is like to endure drought and suffer from a thirst that could drive a man insane? Does He know what it is like to go without food and endure the pain of hunger for a week, for 10 days, 20 days, a month or 40 days? Does He know what it

is like to lose a parent, friend, or loved one, with its heart wrenching agonizing grief, which cannot be verbalized, save in groaning and sighing in spirit? Does He know what it is like to be a refugee, driven from your home and threatened by death? Does He know what it is like to be cruelly tortured for conscience sake while imprisoned? Does He know what it is like to have back pain so sharp and intense it can knock the heart out of a man? Does He know what it is like to be abandoned by one's friends and to be betrayed by one you love?

The Divine certitude of our faith tells us and assures us yes, yes! He has proven His love! What must we do? He tells us simply, "Love one another as I have loved you" (*Jn* 13:34). I heard the late Archbishop Fulton Sheen tell a story of a young girl, and I will conclude my remarks with this, who went out on her first date to a dance. Her house was recessed from the street with a high hedge around it. When she returned home that night, as she passed the hedge she was assaulted and brutally raped. Weeks later, she found out that she was pregnant. This young girl wrote to the Archbishop of her pain, for no one would believe her story except her mother. At her school and church she overheard people comment, "Oh how sad to have a girl like that". She wrote to the Archbishop asking, "What can I do? I cannot bear this!" The good Archbishop wrote her and said, "All this suffering you have taken upon yourself because of the sin of one man. Suppose you took on the sins of 20 people or 30 or 100? Perhaps you might begin to have a bloody sweat". That young girl understood what the Archbishop was saying, and she wrote him back stating, "I will pray for that man who did this to me every day for the rest of my life". With faith in Christ all things are possible.

The love of the Heart of Christ triumphed in this young girl and it can triumph in us also, if we have faith to let Him. If we are willing to open our hearts to His Heart, that "burning furnace of charity", all things are possible. My prayer and my hope for each of you, as we go forth from this Assembly, is that you may continue to "be not afraid"

and open wide the doors of your heart to Christ Jesus our Lord, yesterday, today and forever the same. May you continue to bear witness to that faith “once and for all delivered to the saints”, always radiating His joy and His love to a broken world in the new millennium. May you always be fervent in faith and boldly proclaim the love of Christ crucified to the world; and, assured of His grace, do not fear the world. For Christ our Lord and King is a noble warrior, bearing the wounds of battle on His feet, hands and sides, by thrusting the sword of the cross into the earth has conquered the world, the flesh, and the devil and won the victory. As he beckons you to His side, fight beside Him and die with Him that you may reign with Him! *Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat.*

My love and prayers are with you all. Praise be Jesus Christ now and forever.

6. Paths to faith

FR. DOMINIQUE SENTUCQ

National coordinator for the Catechumenate in France

I am not going to present you with infallible theories or categorical formulae on this topic. These are just some guidelines that I can draw from my experience in the adult catechumenate and in what we call in France “the *recommençants* (re-starters) in faith”.

I shall be speaking about the French context, but these same situations can be found, to different degrees, in the countries of Europe. It could be quite interesting to compare experiences in different geographical and cultural regions.

For the past few years in France, we have noticed an increase in the number of adults who want to become Christians and who ask for baptism or one of the three sacraments of Christian initiation.

At Easter this year, about 2,500 adults over the age of 18 were baptised.

Ten thousand others are following a process of initiation.

Most of them do not have a Catholic background. Their process is not one of rediscovering their baptism, but rather a new and free discovery of the Christian message, with a genuine desire to understand and practise it.

We also notice that other adults who are already baptised and have some kind of Christian background, but who for various reasons had distanced themselves from their faith, now, after some particular event in their lives, want to find their lost or undeveloped faith and ask for another Christian initiation. We call these “the *recommençants* (re-starters) in faith”.

These demands on the Church present it with interesting challenges. They show that it is time to take another look at reality. They open our outlook, and they are a sign of hope.

In order to present the topic “paths to faith”, I will mostly speak about the catechumens that I deal with, and a little about the *recomençants*.

I. SOME GROWING QUESTIONS

1. CATECHUMENS: PEOPLE TODAY WHO ASK TO BECOME CHRISTIANS

A general phenomenon

Of course, because of the concentration of population in the cities, there are more catechumens in an urban setting. However, they can also be found in rural areas and places with a long Christian tradition. Nowadays, all the dioceses of France offer adult Catechumenate.

Experience shows that if there is a visible and accessible Catechumenate, there will be requests for Baptism. The welcome they receive when they first arrive is decisive. It is the first face of the Church that they see.

Young people

Catechumens are mostly young people. 80% of those asking for Baptism are between 18 and 40. This shows that it is not a choice made towards the end of life but at a time of growth in maturity.

Two out of three candidates are women, but the proportion of men is growing.

Diversity

This can be seen in several aspects:

- Place of origin: 80% are originally French. The remaining 20% come from every continent, particularly Africa and Asia.
- Religion of origin: Three out of every four say that they do not come from any religious tradition. 3% come from Buddhism and 9% from traditional religions or Islam, and these are increasing. The latter are very noticeable in the dioceses these days, and the dioceses ask us for information and guidelines on how to adapt religious instruction accordingly. As you can see, there is no proselytising involved.

We must also mention people who have been affected (and often disappointed) by previous experiences: sects, mysterious cults, magic, new religious trends, etc.

In the Catechumenate today, interreligious dialogue finds a natural place...

- Social and professional origins

There is a wide spectrum from university professors to the illiterate, from high officials to the homeless unemployed.

Two categories deserve special mention:

- students and young professionals: they are at a crossroads in their lives.
- people in difficult situations because of their economic and social condition (from deprived areas, unemployed, marginalised, migrants, from the Fourth World, illiterate, illegal immigrants) or because of their personal situation (people who travel, those who are detained, others with an unstable psychological condition, the handicapped, the lonely).

The catechumens are really a reflection of the current social and economic conditions.

- Problematic situations with respect to the demands of the Gospel and the laws of the Church.

The evolution of lifestyles, personal choice and the hazards in life inevitably lead to more and more requests from people with personal problems with regard to the demands of the Gospel and the laws of the Church: matrimonial situations, ideological positions, economic attitudes, etc.

I. THE “RECOMMENÇANTS”: PEOPLE WHO WANT TO REDISCOVER THEIR FAITH

These are young adults, young professionals, young parents, and also people who have just retired.

Many of these people have been hurt by life or by the Church.

They had fallen into conformism with the prevailing currents, but then they decided to start anew, either by their own decision or because of an invitation.

Their lives are inclined to be unstable, and that can lead to either indifference or a desire for roots and depth.

They are also typically spiritually poor.

The *recommençants* look for someone who will listen to them or just let them talk and unburden themselves.

If they come knocking on the Church door, it is because they see that it carries a message that they have lost sight of or forgotten. They trust it because it represents stability and permanence in an ever-changing world.

They have a need to understand. That is why they seek information and explanations. They do not want to return to the faith in a fuzzy or uncritical way.

They are not interested in belonging for sentimental reasons and they regard this as dangerous and unsatisfying.

But beyond this need for knowledge, they have some implicit expectations:

- a need to get to know themselves;

- to be shown how to pray, a desire for spiritual experiences, acquaintance with the Bible;
- a need to open their circle of acquaintances and relate to others, and to do something in the service of others;
- a need for celebration, gestures, signs, tangible things, and a need for references on moral questions.

II. THE PATHS FOLLOWED SO FAR

These requirements can be understood in the context of our secularised society. Moreover, many have grown up in non-practising or seldom-practising families where the children were given freedom to make their own choices.

But the drop in numbers for infant baptism does not explain everything.

II. THEIR MOTIVATIONS

The catechumens

An encounter, an event, or a quest always play a decisive role in the story of a catechumen's option.

- an encounter: a face, Christian witness, a conversation, a welcome, a hand held out, an act of generosity towards them, etc.
- an event: birth, love, bereavement, trials, a visit to a church, a place of pilgrimage, a spiritual experience, etc.
- a quest: a question carried for a long time, reading, frequent exchanges, searching for the meaning of life, etc.

For some, the idea of God had never crossed their minds. They were born and lived in an environment that was not at all Christian. They say

that something totally unexpected and unknown happened. “Something happened to me”. “I’ve had an incredible experience”. This could be in the form of a new certainty or conviction, they unexpectedly receive light that puts a new perspective into their lives, or an inner revelation. More often, they cannot point out when exactly it all started. They find it difficult to express what happened. Their purpose can be ambiguous. Nevertheless, they feel loved, confirmed and perfectly free to accept or suppress that “inner voice”. Many questions, objections or doubts can continue to haunt them, but a peaceful light begins to calm their minds.

Others, on the other hand, from childhood or for a long time, have felt good about loving people and respecting them, and treating them all equally. One catechumen police-officer described it as “the good feeling that Christ incubated in me has come out to the light of day”. They were attracted by the One who dwells in Church environments, who gathers people of every age and gives them the strength of love, service, forgiveness, generosity, gratuitousness and courage in trials. They wanted to know the secret because they had the feeling that the One they called God was there for something. When they took part in a Mass or religious ceremony, it warmed their heart. When they heard someone speak about Jesus, his message, his goodness, his courage during the Passion, this all responded to a kind of intuition that God wants them to be happy and gives happiness to those who believe in him.

Some day they all have to make a choice, and they decide to choose God, the Christ.

They had to come to understand that the answer to these questions would never be found through reason, proof and ideas, but through the discovery and encounter with Someone. They had to learn to know and recognise this God who loves and who calls.

They had to agree to make this journey with other Christians, and to take their community and its demands into consideration.

The diversity of catechumens shows how this experience is possible

for everyone, even though it is unforeseen and unexpected. It does not depend on intellectual capacity, aesthetic sensitivity or favourable environments. The Spirit works wherever it wills and how it wills. This places a demand on our Church to be more attentive to welcome and listen and not be misled by the sometimes ambiguous requests and motivations of those who come.

The recommençants

They decided to come back and follow this path because of:

- a new situation: starting on their professional career, a transfer, retirement age;
- an event: birth of a child, separation;
- requirements for a sacrament;
- catechesis of their children;
- trials: bereavement, illness, unemployment;
- an encounter, an instance of witnessing that impresses them, a visit to a church, the silence of a monastery, etc;
- encounter with other religions;
- disappointing spiritual experience.

Broadly speaking, it is also because of a reflection on the meaning of life, the desire to take hold of one's life, sensitivity to art, to beauty, the questions posed by science, and everything that causes one to think and rethink about the purpose of one's existence.

II. WHAT THAT SHOWS US

These requests make us witnesses of the movement of faith in these people.

It shows us three things:

- Believing is an act of freedom.

In our society, to believe is something we choose to do freely. No one is obliged to adhere to a particular faith. Each one is free to stand up for personal convictions. Catechumens will be able to declare their faith with complete freedom and awareness. This is important in our society noted for its secularism and pluralism.

To choose to believe is one way of making a stand. Christian faith is seen as a personal way to use one's freedom and to find contentment with one's existence. Christian faith is seen as something crucially important that gives purpose to one's life and activity. It is expected to be a stabilising force in a fragile society.

On the day of baptism, a catechumen is asked three times: "Do you believe?" The catechumen personally answers three times, "I believe", contributing to the "we believe" of the Church.

Commitment to faith is like gambling one's freedom, and this does a service for the meaning of freedom in society.

– Believing is a concrete declaration of human identity.

To say, "I believe" and experience the freedom of a believer says something about the basic identity of the human person. It shows that a person is not an object that can be manipulated from outside. The catechumen and the *recommençant* want to be welcomed and listened to. This is something our society is not good at offering. It is far too often based on exclusion and conformism. What the catechumen experiences and the *recommençant* rediscovers is that God calls each one by their name: "I have engraved your name on the palm of my hand".

– Believing is a gamble in trust

Those who come are mostly young people who do not trust and whom nobody trusts.

Their request depends on finding or rediscovering trust, confidence in themselves and in others and in life.

Choosing to believe depends on trust.

If God comes to us and shows us our freedom, with that gesture he shows himself to be the God of trust. God trusts us and so we can depend on him. He will always be with us.

This trust is seen, especially among the poor, as the support of their freedom, their ability to be involved and to be responsible.

It is the Church's task to give a society filled with doubt the trust that comes from God.

“ You are worthy in my sight ”, God said.

III. THE FRUITS OF FAITH

The experience of conversion is one of freedom from being closed in on ourselves and from being alienated. Those who have this experience will feel they have found a new meaning to life and new reasons to live and hope. They will have a different view of themselves and others, courage to take action, to testify, and to give themselves to others.

To believe, to be converted, to start again: these do not cut us off from the world, but send us out again with new momentum.

For catechumens, *recommençants*, and for all believers, this work of faith can be discerned and verified when we feel a sense of inner peace and deep joy, and of being at one with ourselves, even when we are not quite free from doubts, trials and spiritual struggles.

CONCLUSION

Catechumens (and *recommençants*) are a grace for the Church today. They come along now when we did not expect them. There was no programme put in place to attract them. No one foresaw their arrival. They showed up without anyone going in search of them. They are simply

gifts from God. They make us look again at our faith and our pastoral service. They remind us to sharpen our vision and multiply the doors we open in welcome.

When they are with us, we cannot live according to habit. Because of them, the Church is encouraged, is born again, and regains confidence in its capacity to give life. They are a demanding challenge, but they are a source of hope, now and always.

TESTIMONIES

The transforming power of faith

1. I felt that something was missing in my life

MICHEL REMERY

Seminarian - Netherlands

In summary, my story is one of three World Youth Days. It starts in Manila, where I was one of the Dutch delegates to the Forum. So I was sitting in your place five years ago. Just as you now sit on these yellow chairs here, representing your own country or organisation.

At that time I was studying Architecture, specialising in Project Management. As any Dutch student I lived a nice social life without paying too much attention to the Church. I had quite a negative view of the Church. If I went to Mass on Sunday, I'd find myself in a big church, with just a few old people. Every week the old priest would say the same words, directed to a completely different generation from mine. A big pity, for I could see the good side of the dream Jesus had, but alas, the Church was finished...

This is the state of mind in which I went to Manila. During the World Youth Forum there I experienced a completely different Church. Young people from all around the world told each other about their experiences back home. In sharing, celebrating and praying we became very close in a few days. I saw another face of the Church. Here I found the beauty of our very international Church, present in all these countries and present in so many different ways. It was here too, that I experienced the strong feeling of community, of not being alone as followers of Christ. I realised that on a global

level the Church is a lively and living community of people that all believe in the message of Jesus.

I went home with the idea that all of my friends of the Forum would try to be missionaries in the heart of our society in their own country, just as we wrote in the Message of the Forum in Manila. This gave me a lot of energy to do the same. I travelled around in the Netherlands to tell youth groups about my experiences in Manila. This was another good experience.

In short, I continued my studies and had a totally different vision of the Church. After finishing my studies I found a job as a civil architect in the Royal Air Forces. It was my job to manage the construction process for all the buildings needed on the different airbases in the country. I had a good job, possibilities for a good career and enjoyed life in every way. However, I felt that something was missing in my life.

Whilst representing the Forum of Manila to the Forum in Paris, I heard about the possibility to spend a sabbatical year in France to really take the time to listen to what God wanted me to do. I decided to quit my job and one month later I was in France. There I spent a year learning about God, the bible and prayer and tried to discern God's will in my life. Listening to the Lord I thought he told me to get married. Why otherwise would I have fallen in love with a girl?

After this year I found a good job as an expatriot (expat) for a big Dutch Engineering and Consultancy office. Again I enjoyed a good salary, good friends, a nice girlfriend and very good career possibilities. All seemed to be great and promising. I was about to be promoted considerably in the company, when I fell ill. A virus was draining all energy from me. All I wanted was to sleep and rest. I could not work anymore and had to return to my country, leaving all behind.

So there I was. At home. Alone. Ill. Back to the beginning? I could hardly do a thing during the day. After finishing all the 'Donald Duck' books I could find, I started reading more serious (and more frightening) books, about saints and such things. A priest accompanied me spir-

itually and thus this time of illness turned into a time of proper searching. Not knowing when I would be healed, I had all the time in the world to pray and be silent. I learned a bit how to be silent in prayer, i.e. how to be instead of to act. That was already a great change, as I could not be described as a patient person. The action did not come first, but being present to God and giving myself completely to Him. Well, for that I had time enough, didn't I?

Slowly I grew towards the point where I could say 'Lord, here I am. What would you like me to do?' I no longer minded how long I would be ill. The most important thing was the will of God. It is like standing before God with open hands, willing to offer it all to Him. Thus it was that I, after almost a year of illness, started to feel in what direction I had to search for that will. One morning, during my daily prayer, it became very clear to me. No need to keep running around it. Whether I liked it or not, I should become a priest.

This discovery was strongly confirmed in the weeks afterwards. Whatever I did to find a mistake in my discernment, I could not find it. As soon as I was getting better I went to my bishop and from that moment on all went very quickly. I told him my story and he decided to send me to Rome to do my studies.

At this moment I have just finished my first year at the Gregorian University here in town. I lived in the English College, where I was confirmed in both my deepest desires: to become a priest and to live a community life with other Christians.

And it is now, during what is for me the third World Youth Day, in Rome, that I am able to share this with you.

2. There is Someone there lighting up the road we travel on together

MATTEO AND AGNESE RENZI

A married couple from Italy

Matteo

When Monsignor Boccardo asked Agnese and me to talk about the impact faith has had on our lives, I thought perhaps we were to be examples of how it should not be. After all, our lives are so ordinary and unspectacular, I did not quite understand why we should be the ones to come and give witness.

I can tell you our story in a couple of words. It has far fewer chapters and adventures than Michel's story.

We came together about six years ago. It was the classic story of two people in the parish. We both grew up with the scout movement and some other activities. It was not a case of a first meeting where an interior voice says, "There she is! This is the right one. Marry her!" On the contrary, we each had serious doubts. I was very uncertain of what I should do and of where my vocation lay. It was the same for Agnese.

We went out together for several years and two years ago we decided to get married. We had not as yet finished our studies and we had not yet found somewhere to live. If you take into account that marriage is not very fashionable in Italy these days, and that we were still quite young – I was 23 and Agnese 22 – you can understand that this decision, although simple and normal, caused some surprise among our ex-classmates, our university companions, and even in our community of scout leaders. I was particularly struck by the reaction of my ex-classmates who had not finished their high school studies. They began to ask me all kinds of questions that had some logic: "University? Nowadays, work is not as stable as it used to be, and you have to do your appren-

ticeship as a lawyer and you won't earn much for a long time. You'll lose your freedom..." Anyway, these are things that you hear from people who have not lived your experience.

Maybe this is what faith is for me: to see things in a different way, even the ordinary everyday things. My companions spoke of work, difficulties, behaviour, ethics, future professions, and I tried to explain that for me marriage is the joy of putting everything into a life as a couple, the joy of being able to shout aloud that life has meaning, fullness and can be enjoyed. Life as a couple can be more difficult in some aspects, but more beautiful in others, and anyway, we feel that we were made to live as a pair. There is also the joy of not just looking into each other's eyes, but of looking together in the same direction. It often seems to us, when we go out with friends, that other couples are just looking at themselves and each other: "Oh, how beautiful you are, how great we are, how good we are..."

I don't think that this will automatically make us saints. On the contrary. To give a trivial example, yesterday evening we were about to miss the train to get here, and I was certain that she had lost the car keys. I was absolutely convinced. It so happened that I had lost them. We missed the train and got the next one. If you had only heard the lovely things we said to each other just then, you would have asked what kind of witness as a married couple we were coming here to give.

Aside from the everyday difficulties, however, I believe that faith really plays a part in my life, in spite of my limitations and the fact that I don't pray enough and that I make so many mistakes. For me, faith is like slamming into an articulated lorry without being hurt because, from that moment on, everything is different. It is different in the way you look at your wife in the morning when she is still sleeping and you are going to work, it is different in how you finish university, it is different in how you educate – we share the responsibility for the education of a scout group – it is different in how you read the newspaper, how you relate to the daily news, how you go to the pub with your friends in the

evening. I am also becoming involved in politics, and it is different in how you live politics. I was surprised to hear that a well-known American personality said that Jesus was his ideal philosopher and so he instituted a Jesus Day. I'd say that it is even a risk to live your Christian witness only from the philosophical or behavioural point of view. Contact with faith really changes you completely. For me, marriage means trying to walk humbly in the presence of the Lord, whether in the little things of everyday life, or in our great and small dreams. For example, Agnese and I dream of building a school together some time in the future. I think perhaps we'll be no more than the caretakers. The point is that we share the little everyday things, and also our great plans and projects.

The last thing I want to say is this: I have personally had, and obviously still have, so many doubts and dilemmas, but there is something that gives me serenity. It is that I can look at the path followed so far and see that, when it really counted, I not only did what I wanted to do, but I did what the Lord wanted me to do. I try to live with this serenity every day, knowing that there will always be difficulties, from those of lost car keys to far more serious problems.

Agnese

I also feel absolutely inadequate to be the one to speak because, as Matteo said, we live and feel our marriage to be a very ordinary story and even rather limited. Every day there are problems like the lost car keys and so many other things that make us have to work at loving each other more.

I would just like to mention the Gospel passage that we chose for our wedding ceremony. It is the part about the disciples going to Emmaus. We are particularly fond of this passage because of the picture it presents of two people going along the road talking to each other. It is almost a metaphor of daily life made up of small little things. The relationship between those two people undergoes a change when they

recognise that Jesus is walking along with them. They say, “did not our hearts burn within us?” So, this is the sort of commitment we made when we got married, to try to recognise, each day, that there is Someone there to take us by the hand and guide us. If this Person is not there to guide us, then it is true that everything is relative.

There is a well-known song called, “Dipende” (It depends), and it has as a subtitle, “Or rather, how all absolute truths are relative”. This is the exact opposite of our idea of marriage. In our marriage we firmly believe that you can say, “I love you forever, for eternity”, and we can say it because there is Someone who can guarantee this eternity. If we did not have this Someone to light up our path together, then it would really be hard to believe that there is any meaning in matrimony. It would also be true that tomorrow each one can go their own way because it is true that even love can run out. When I see Matteo in the early morning with his hair standing on end, I no longer feel my heart pounding as it used to in the early days when we exchanged our first words and first kisses. I certainly don’t feel that any more. However, I think that the wonderful thing about marriage is that you find yourself in love that is eternal, and you try to participate in this love as far as it is humanly possible. You try to see in the other person the image of the love of God and you want to go with that person together towards eternal love, and that is the only thing that is truly fulfilling. It is true that everything is relative in this life, and it is true that we are never satisfied, and it is for this reason that we set out along the path to the only truth that can make us free, the only absolute truth.

One more thing: in Italy it is said that marriage is the tomb of love. That means that when you marry you can’t do anything else anymore because you lose your freedom and you can’t go out, especially when you have children, etc. We firmly believe that marriage should be a well-spring of eternal love, and that is why we got married. If we too had believed that marriage was the tomb of love, then we would have said: first let’s finish our studies, get a job, find a nice house and furnish it

completely, and then when we are ready for tranquillity and peace, then we'll settle down and get married. We came here just to give testimony of the beauty of finding a person who can give us another image of Jesus. I don't know if there is such a thing as the ideal person made for each one of us. But I am sure that Matteo helps me to see things about Jesus that I would not see if I were alone. It is for this reason that I married him, because he helps me to reach salvation. I believe that this is the aim of every marriage.

3. There is a God, and I want to live my life in keeping with that fact

SR. REGINA MARIE DONOHUE
U.S.A.

What impact has faith had on my life? Answering this question I realized that it is very hard to find an area of my life that my faith has not effected. That is the nature of Our Faith. Our God loves every area of our life and desires every area to reflect His Life. This topic, of our faith effecting every aspect of our lives, brings me to what I would like to share with you today.

My faith did not always impact every area of my life.

I grew up in a good Catholic family, and considered myself a good Catholic... even better informed than most about my faith. I went to Mass every Sunday, even daily Mass sometimes, and I never did anything REALLY bad.

Well when I was a junior in college I had a bit of a rude awakening. I went to France for the year to study French in the city of Montpellier. I loved it. I made a great group of friends that took me right in as one of them. I loved France, I continued going to Mass on Sundays but I could not find a church in that area that had young people in it. Everyone was either over 70 or under 7. So one evening when I was with my group of friends I asked them what turned out to be a life changing question... "Where can I find a Mass that has some young people at it?" I just got blank stares as my first response and then one of them said slowly, "You go to Mass?" "Well yeah, don't you?" "No I am an agnostic".

I had never met someone who called themselves an agnostic. The rest of them I found out, were also either agnostic or atheist. They were shocked that I was a believer because I had seemed so "normal". All of a sudden I was the recipient of an onslaught of questions:

Why do you believe in God?

How do you know He is real?

Why do you believe and I don't?

If there is a God then, why is there suffering in the world?

Here is the life-changing part... I had no answers to any of their questions. I was floored. Why could I not answer them? What was my faith that I could not even say why I believed in God? I was embarrassed because these were questions that had occurred to me before. These questions had crossed my mind but I had never had the courage to really face them. To tell you the truth I was afraid that there were no answers to these questions.

Well now I was forced to face them...all I could say was, "I don't know". Well my friends had answers. They said to me almost with compassion: You only believe because your parents believe. You have been spoon fed religion since you were born; that is the only reason you believe. There is no God. God is just a crutch for those who are too weak to face reality. What you see is what you get.

Their answers made a lot of sense to me. Their answers seemed to explain to me in fact, why I could not answer their questions. I could not answer them because my faith was not real. I could not answer them I thought, because there is no God, that is why I do not know why I believe, that is why they do not believe. I have been spoon fed my religion. It is not my faith; it is my parents' faith. They have given it to me without my ever choosing it.

In a matter of a week I, a 20 year old college student, went from one who considered herself among the upper crust of believers to one who declared herself an atheist. If at that time you would have asked me, "What impact has your faith had on your life?" I would have said "very little". I saw my faith as a quaint fairy tale. I wished I could still believe. I wished life really was like that, but I had to face reality: I had

believed all my life and what did I have to show for it? Nothing. I could not even say why I thought God existed. Therefore... God did not exist.

(Well I thank God now for this very experience. Though it was painful and most of my reasoning was off kilter, the Truth was beginning to open something in me. I was facing myself and the big questions in life. I was not just continuing with something on the surface out of fear of looking deeper. I believe that this was Our Lord who put me in this spot... in order to lead me out to something truer and deeper).

I had never let my faith become deep enough... It didn't yet effect all the areas of my life. It effected how I saw myself... a Catholic, and it effected what I did on Sunday mornings... go to Mass. It also effected what I thought was right and wrong... but not necessarily what I did.

So do you want to know what God did to change that?

I went about 6 months working hard at facing reality and not using God as a crutch. A little bit before Easter a friend of mine who was studying in Ireland at the time wrote to me and asked if I wanted to make a pilgrimage with him. He was going to Lourdes, Assisi, Rome and then over to where the Virgin Mary was being said to be appearing in Medjugorie. I knew he had a very strong faith. In fact he wanted to become a priest. I couldn't write to him because I did not want to tell him what I had discovered. In my pride I said to myself, he could not handle this truth. He needed to lean on his faith; I do not want to burst his bubble.

Shortly after that, my Mother called me one morning... her first question to me was... (First let me say that she is Colombian)... "deed you go to Mes yesterde?" To make a long story short... she broke my heart. Or rather I broke her heart when I finally told her that no I don't go to Mass anymore Mom, and no I don't believe in prayer anymore. In tears she made me promise to say a rosary...just one rosary.

I had never had it in me to get rid of my rosary, so it was still near my bed. I sat down to fulfill my promise and I got so mad. I was mad at

my mother for pushing religion on me again, but I was maddest at myself because I was torn inside. I really didn't know what I believed. I was trying to live, as though God did not exist but I was becoming very depressed and doubting we could really know anything for sure.

As I sat there I noticed the letter from my friend in Ireland... It was clear, I have to go on this pilgrimage. I will know for sure once we get to Medjugorje that this is all a hoax. I will know that God doesn't exist and can go home with ammunition. "Mom, I was there. It is a hoax! "

So to make another long story short, we traveled for a week and a half before we got to Medjugorje. And every day... something happened that made me have to wonder: Little unexpected gifts, uncanny coincidences meeting people with incredible faith. When we got to Medjugorje it was Holy Saturday, there were freshly plowed fields on both sides of us as we walked down the road to the town. Looking at the fields I thought, "That is how I feel right now... everything inside has just been plowed under, I do not know what is what but I am ready for anything... I just want to know...is there a God or is there not..."

On Easter morning I went into the church with my friend and knelt down before a statue of Our Lady... I do not know how long I was there but at one point I felt there was a woman standing next to me... very close... I had my eyes closed and I thought to myself how do you know it is a woman? Because, it seems that it is my mother. It was so strong... I thought to myself, " you are tired, you know your Mother is worried and you feel guilty"... It didn't go away... " You have been living on bread and oranges for the past two weeks, surely that must be having an effect"... no change. I decided to open my eyes and look. I could see no one, but even with my eyes open her presence was so strong... it was my mother, but not my mother back in Minnesota... my mother in Heaven. It was so real. She didn't say anything but her message was so clear... she loved me and I was okay. I was so at peace. I had never experienced that kind of peace. I remember thinking to myself; " I

could die now ". I knew it was Our Lady and I knew that there was no way she could be real, there was no reason for her presence except that there is a God.

Now I knew. There is a God. God does exist and I want to live my life in keeping with that fact. I want every aspect of my life to reflect that there is a God and that he loves us.

I still didn't have all the answers to my French friends' questions but I knew that there were answers. And I knew I could find them because the big answer was clear. God exists.

CONCLUSION

Message from the Forum to the Youth of the World

As we celebrate the 15th World Youth Day in the Great Jubilee of the year 2000, we, the participants of the 7th International Youth Forum, representing the diverse cultures of the world, would like to share the fruits of our reflections. We feel the desire of young people entering the third millennium to actively face the challenges within our hearts, our religious and social environments, our countries and our world.

The Holy Father, voicing the call of the Church, invites us: “*Young people of every continent, do not be afraid to be the saints of the new millennium!*”.

But what does holiness mean to us? It means being a sign of contradiction to the values of society; it means forgiving and reconciling; it means acting in our daily life renewed by God’s Love; it means carrying hope to the ones who have no hope; it means living in Jesus Christ, the One that loves us with all our faults and qualities; it means being willing to go against the current and to carry the burden of the cross.

Bearing the hardships of the cross and the difficulties it entails, we must remain coherent and committed to our faith. Engulfed with the grace of God and the support and care of others as well as our past experiences, we are filled with confidence and certainty that we can face any obstacle. But in our daily struggle through life, the road is not always smooth, nor has it ever been promised to be so. Walking through these spiritual valleys, we must maintain our focus and trust in God, following the example of Mary, our Mother.

Faith is not an act of our own will, it is a gift of God acting in our lives, a gift that grows in sharing. Communication of faith awakens our

potential to love as Christ loves, for “*the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us*” so that we may always dwell in him. Christ, who lives in us, is the force which enables us to be a living testimony to those afflicted by the moral ailments of a society of which we form part. The very core of a life in Christ is the cry for unity and equality in a world full of diverse cultures and in need of renewal.

The different expressions of the same Faith according to diverse cultures, are for us the motivation to assume our responsibilities and to be active in our local Churches. So let us commit ourselves to making them more alive, filled with young people and more adapted to the local situation. Let us also participate actively in the discussions about the role of the youth in the Church and of the Church in the world. Let us accept and respect all those who live different beliefs and take different paths through life in order to build a world of peace.

We merely hope that these reflections may serve as possible solutions to overcome our challenges. Yet the only answer is Christ... The Christ of Yesterday, Today and Forever.

The great Jubilee proclamation

JAMES FRANCIS Card. STAFFORD

President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity

The Forum 2000 has been an extraordinary blessing for us. You have been the reason for that. By the grace and power of the Holy Spirit you have been gathered as Church for these few days. All of you have shared your experiences of the Christian faith: those from the poorest countries and those from the more developed countries.

Outside of our doors over the past 24 hours, hundreds of thousands of young people are being welcomed to Rome. They are coming as pilgrims at the invitation of the Holy Father. As members of the International Forum you have preceded them by several days. During the Eucharist which we will be celebrating shortly may I ask that you pray that the pilgrimage of these newly arriving young people will be a grace for them. May it especially deepen their commitment to their baptismal identity and their baptismal mission.

The opening of World Youth Day 2000 will take place on the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into heaven. As one of the representatives of the Orthodox Church indicated here, we need to entrust ourselves to Our Lady, the *Hodigitria*, the icon of whom has accompanied us during our Forum. She is the Mother who shows the pilgrim's way to Jesus. We pray that the hundreds of thousands of young people arriving today may learn the way of happiness from Mary. You note that her right hand is pointing to Jesus. She is the one who points out the way of salvation. May the young pilgrims walking the ways of Europe to Rome and walking the ways of all the other continents have Mary as their guide pointing the way.

I have tried to listen to as many of your interventions as possible. They have been rich in content. We have instructed one another in what

it means to live in a Church of infinite variety. The Profession of Faith will not be the same for me in the future. I refer especially to that part of the Creed in which we profess our belief in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. The Catholic Church is not simply one, but it is one in the infinite variety of its beauty. How God has blessed us in this experience of many nations and races and cultures.

During these days of the Forum you have been reflecting intensely upon the central truth of our faith: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”. The incredible mystery of the Incarnation is the only reason for the Jubilee Year. In light of this fact you have asked many questions about your life, about the future of your life in the Church and the future of your life in society.

You will find the answer when you walk through the Holy Year Door at St. Peter’s Basilica. For Jesus said, “I am the door”. Walking across the threshold of the Holy Door you will hear the words of Jesus, “If anyone enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture”. The *Hodigitria* has shown the way across the threshold of this door. Mary has also been called by one of you, Our Lady of Silence. And that is true. She has walked with us during these days and has directed our steps to the one who said of himself, “I am the door”.

Mary has been quietly with us and has been pointing the way to Jesus throughout our discussions. We emphasized repeatedly the importance of contemplating silently the central phrase of the Good News: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”.

During these days we have meditated upon the great Jubilee Proclamation: “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us”. For these last moments of our Forum let us meditate once again upon that mystery of mysteries.

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us”. This is the glorious reality we contemplate in the Jubilee Year 2000. It is the reason for your pilgrimage to Rome. The mystery of the Incarnation of the eternal Word

is entirely fresh and unprecedented and unique. Nowhere before or after has anyone made such a claim as Jesus made: "I am the way and the truth and the life". People everywhere are pulled up short in hearing his assertion of authority.

You make your Roman pilgrimage with the intense searching characteristic of young people. You have many questions concerning the future of your life. Above all, you ask what you must do so that your life might have full value and full meaning.

Crossing the threshold of the Holy Door is the significant step for your pilgrimage. In passing over that threshold, you again recall that the Incarnate Word, Jesus of Nazareth, said, "I am the Door". Here Jesus responds to the searching questions of your youth by explaining, "If anyone enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and will find pasture". Since the mystery of the Incarnation carries the key response to the many questions you raised during the Forum, I welcome you with a reflection on each word of that revolutionary phrase. For the Word which came forth from God answers all the questions that young people could ask God. Each phrase is important in that Jubilee proclamation.

1. The Word

No word that we utter can fully express our person. But God from all eternity has from his own nature brought forth from within himself a Word that is the perfect expression of himself. He is not called the thought of God as if was God revolving in his mind thoughts to produce a word. He is the true Word, the only begotten of the Father.

We confess that God is Father. That God is Father means that he has a Child. That Child is called the Word of God and He is God himself. "He is the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth". "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and was God". What sort of beginning was this? The revelation that the Word

“was” always outstrips the human imagination. In fact, our reason cannot come to a stop anywhere in reflecting upon the verb ‘was.’ So the expression “In the beginning” means everlasting existence and existence without end.

There exists within the loving Triune God a One and an Other and their union. The Word is the eternal Son of the living God, the Holy One of God, the Wisdom of God. The Word is the fullest expression of the Father. He is God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God. He is the center of the whole drama of history. It is He who makes sense of our story. The Word, the *Logos*, made a text from nothing and gave the text a meaning. Light and life and wisdom are not found in ourselves. The eternal Word is the Light and Life and Wisdom of the world. “In him was light and the light was the life of men”.

2. *The Word was made*

In the Incarnation, the “human nature was assumed not absorbed”. “The Son of God ... worked with human hands; he thought with a human mind. He acted with a human will, and with a human heart he loved. Born of the Virgin Mary, he has truly been made one of us, like to us in all things except sin” (*Gaudium et Spes* 22).

3. *The Word was made flesh*

The eternal Word of God became the Child of a mother. All that is human opened to the divine and at the same time, all that is divine entered into the human. God’s flesh touches ours. The Word did not merely descend upon Jesus, enter into him, or abide in him. In Jesus, God becomes our neighbor. It is one thing to say the Word of God is in the flesh. It is another to say that the Word of God became flesh. Persons who hear the word of God and accept it have the word abiding in them; but only the Word of God *was made* flesh.

As iron has the capacity for incandescence, so the Son of Man carried within himself the quality of the divine life. Jesus of Nazareth knew himself to be the perfect and exact expression of the heavenly Father. Jesus not only spoke of the Father, but represented him. Jesus revealed the almighty Father not only in his human strength but in his weakness, in his sayings and in his silence, in his disclosures and in what he withheld from view, in his death and burial and in his resurrection.

4. “*And the Word dwelt among us*”

The life of Jesus is the history of the Word Incarnate. He underwent all the major events of life and death that every human being has. The Incarnation signals God’s humbling, his *kenosis*, his emptying right down to the point of God’s binding of himself by entering into a particular man, a man who, unique though he was, does not cease to be a man among men.

At the center of the Father’s plans must have been that his beloved Son and eternal Word, the only All – Pure One, should descend into the abyss of two temptations. His descent into the flesh went further; it led down all the way to the Cross and to hell itself. “He descended into hell” is part of the fifth article of the same Creed.

Hundreds of thousands of you will cross the threshold of the Holy Door. You will enter into ‘the House of Peter’ and come together at Peter’s tomb, the Prince of the Apostles and the foundation of the Church. There in the sacramental presence of Jesus you will profess Peter’s original *Credo*. “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”.

We have also spoken at length about the renewal of the catechuminate and the three Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. For a few minutes, let us review the origin of our identity as Christians.

The baptized are the truly free persons of the new millennium! WYD will help you recover the source of that freedom. Baptism is the

source of that freedom. St. Paul said, “For freedom Christ has set us free”. Before Baptism, you were slaves to ingratitude. You did not know how to use the gift of freedom. You were incapable of giving adequate thanks to God.

Baptism into Christ’s death is the miracle of a new beginning. Its waters have washed over you. The Chrism has sealed you with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.

Dear young people, you are the truly free persons of the new millennium! With the acute vision of a second naivete you discover that the natural world is made new. In the baptismal miracle of an absolute genesis God’s children know that the youthful heart is the heart-beat of the world.

Thanksgiving to God becomes the supreme confession of finite freedom. You are called to be Eucharist in Christ Jesus. Everything is gift. All your being, your freedom, your existence, your youth, your self-realization, your self-determination, your incommunicable subjectivity, your very self, all that is yours – all is the gift of the infinite freedom of God and His love. All has its origin in God. None is your own property. Nor has anything been merely lent to you. “Everything is ”.

During these days of the Forum, Jesus has prepared you for the great drama following this forum. We have implored God to send his Spirit and to make us witnesses – these constitute the essence of the Church that evangelizes.

The disciples at Pentecost were cast forth by the unexpected hurricane of the Holy Spirit; they were exiled from the protective walls of the upper room in Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit ordered them outside into the hostile world to proclaim Christ.

That is the meaning of the experience you are facing in the world as young adults. Many of you are venturing forth into a culture verging on nihilism. The times require Christians who will consistently implore God to send forth his Spirit and thus will themselves be enabled to wit-

ness to the Risen Lord in the world. Others of you will be venturing forth into societies of great physical poverty. In Asia, with one or two national exceptions, you are part of a small minority, frequently persecuted.

Love alone is credible – today as in the past. God's love alone is believable. These are my concluding words. Never tire of reading and contemplating the account of the Passion of Jesus in the Gospels. They reveal the passionate love, the beauty, the glory of God.

7TH INTERNATIONAL YOUTH FORUM

APPENDICES

List of Delegates

Abirached Claire	<i>Lebanon</i>
Addis Janet	<i>South Africa</i>
Adoukpe Elzèa	<i>Benin</i>
Aguilar Merino Damaris Nebit	<i>El Salvador</i>
Alexander Shervone	<i>Antilles</i>
Alexander Roshan	<i>India</i>
Alfonso Pavon Any Gabriela	<i>Honduras</i>
Andersson Lars	<i>Sweden</i>
Antwi – Boateng Francis	<i>Ghana</i>
Argoneto Pierluigi	<i>Italy</i>
Balode Baiba	<i>Latvia</i>
Barrientos Reyes Sandra Pamela	<i>Chile</i>
Barrouk Maher	<i>Palestinian Territories</i>
Bahish Fadi	<i>Israel</i>
Baxla Prashant	<i>Taizé Community</i>
Bentoglio Francesca	<i>Switzerland</i>
Bernard Timothy A. X.	<i>South Africa</i>
Berzina Iluta	<i>Latvia</i>
Bhatti Azeem Shiraz	<i>Pakistan</i>
Bibi Brian	<i>Seychelles</i>
Bien Aimé Marie Lise Cinthia	<i>Mauritius</i>
Blaise Dachecha	<i>Haiti</i>
Borjigin Myagmarsuren	<i>Mongolia</i>
Bosili Benjamin	<i>Papua New Guinea</i>
Bourdoikan Naim	<i>Lebanon</i>
Braga da Cunha Ferreira Martim Maria	<i>Teams of Our Lady – Youth</i>
Braykeh Rim – Pierre	<i>Syria</i>
Bright Shannoh	<i>Liberia</i>

Brljafa Gordana	<i>Croatia</i>
Buo-Ruey Tsao (Augustine)	<i>Taiwan</i>
Cabascango Guajan José Alejandro	<i>Ecuador</i>
Cabral Zarza Elsa María	<i>Paraguay</i>
Cailliaux Emmanuel	<i>Famille de l'Assomption</i>
Camacho Diego	<i>Encuentros of Youth Promotion</i>
Camacho Danielle	<i>Guam (Pacific)</i>
Canu Maria Grazia	<i>Italy</i>
Capua Alessandro	<i>Neocatecumenal Way</i>
Carretero Morilla Leopoldo Antonio	<i>Dominican Republic</i>
Castorani Gianni	<i>Jeunesse Lumière</i>
Černoga Mirna	<i>Croatia</i>
Cervera Casanueva Montserrat	<i>Regnum Christi</i>
Cesareo Agostino-Luca	<i>Youth Eucharistic Movement</i>
Champagne Guillaume	<i>France</i>
Charbonneau Benoit	<i>Chemin Neuf Community</i>
Chonta Mutale Martin	<i>Zambia</i>
Christensen Barbara	<i>Denmark</i>
Chu Chi-Hsin (Teresa)	<i>Taiwan</i>
Chudová Ludmila	<i>Slovakia</i>
Čičūnas Juozas	<i>Lithuania</i>
Clemente David	<i>OMAAEEC</i>
Collado Rodriguez Maria Ramona	<i>Dominican Republic</i>
Colley Joseph	<i>Gambia</i>
Contreras Macarena	<i>Sweden</i>
Corvera Córdoba Juan Carlos	<i>IUGSE</i>
Cristiano Paolo	<i>St. Egidio Community</i>
D'Halluin Amélie	<i>ICCG</i>
D'Silva Celine	<i>India</i>
Da Cruz Lucilia Conceição	<i>Angola</i>
Darby Derek	<i>Ireland</i>
De Carvalho Carlos Paulo Fernandes	<i>Angola</i>
De Changy Jordane	<i>IUGSE</i>
De Pasquale Ceratti Stefano	<i>Regnum Christi</i>
Di Stasi Sandra	<i>Switzerland</i>
Dick Felix E.	<i>Antilles</i>
Dinichert Olivier	<i>Switzerland</i>
Dixon Fernandez George	<i>MIJARC</i>

List of Delegates

Doumanova Nikoleta	<i>Bulgaria</i>
Draguet Florence	<i>Belgium</i>
Dragus Anna	<i>Conference of European Churches</i>
Duarte Franco Victor Manuel	<i>Paraguay</i>
Dunn Shaun	<i>FIMCAP</i>
Ebcim Mario Antonio	<i>Turkey</i>
Ekomie Ogandaga Hermine M. Laure	<i>Gabon</i>
Elias Badie	<i>Israel</i>
Emmen Leon	<i>Netherlands</i>
Engon Bernadette-Marie	<i>ACISJF</i>
Erard Véronique	<i>France</i>
Etzold Bastian	<i>Schönstatt</i>
Eusebio Ricardo	<i>Guam (Pacific)</i>
Evangelisti Chiara	<i>Italy</i>
Falero Rodríguez Raúl Waldemar	<i>Uruguay</i>
Falo German	<i>Argentina</i>
Farfán Caballero Christian Alberto	<i>Christian Life Movement</i>
Farrugia Ivan	<i>Malta</i>
Feydash Maryana	<i>Ukraine</i>
Fichefeux Marie	<i>Emmanuel Community</i>
Fortin Stéphane	<i>Foundations for a New World</i>
François de Paul Voahanginirina	<i>Marian Youth (Vincentian)</i>
Franz Larissa Anne-Marie	<i>Finland</i>
Gagné Rosalie	<i>Canada</i>
Gahan Linda	<i>Ireland</i>
Gaiffe Frédéric	<i>OMAAEEC - Youth</i>
Gami Jean-Pierre	<i>Chad</i>
Garba Emmanuel	<i>Nigeria</i>
García – Carpintero Martin José Joaquín	<i>Spain</i>
García Sande Laura	<i>Teresian Association</i>
García Concepción Eric. I.	<i>Puerto Rico</i>
Garosi Giordano	<i>Centro Volontari della Sofferenza</i>
Gebhard Laurensius	<i>Namibia</i>
Ginther Clara	<i>Conference of European Churches</i>
Góis Mendonça Sandra Cristina	<i>Portugal</i>
Gomez Rodríguez Tania	<i>Cuba</i>
Gómez Barahona Koritza Elizabeth	<i>Honduras</i>
Gómez Silvia Karolina	<i>M.T.A.</i>

González Karen Yasmin	ICCG
Gonzalez Martínez Francisco Geogni	Cuba
Gorenc Tanja	Slovenia
Govoni Giovanni	Youth for a United World (Focolari)
Grant Alan	New Zealand
Grech Marisa	Malta
Greguolo Francesca	Italy
Grigis Libero	Rinnovamento nello Spirito Santo
Guadalix Iglesias Sonsoles	Communion and Liberation
Haddad Laila	Jordan
Hadonou Akouavi Inès Laurenda	Benin
Hamada Akihisa	Japan
Han Clara In-Sil	ICCS
Hanson Augustina	Ghana
Harkins Joseph	Scotland
Heiramo Teemu	Finland
Hemengdi Koumassigue Claudine	Chad
Hemmert Tilo	Germany
Henrik Pamela Vanessa	Argentina
Hijazin Handal	Jordan
Hoarau Laurent	Reunion (France)
Holden Matthew	England & Wales
Hwang Eun-Ah	Korea
Iijima Yuko	Japan
Imoh Confidence Ifeyinwa	Nigeria
Irace Giuseppe	Italy
Ivashkiv Nataliya	Ukraine
Izos Dalba Ibeth	Panama
Izquierdo García Raúl	Faith and Light - International
Jahncke Benavente Javier	Peru
Joseph Iqbal	Pakistan
Juevesano Mary Grace	Philippines
Kahema Christine Mueni	Kenya
Karri Abraham	Foyers de Charité
Kavale Ambrosia	Papua New Guinea
Kayastha Purnima	Nepal
Khaloul Rany	Israel
Kisakürek İrem	Turkey

List of Delegates

Koffi Gérardine – Nathalie	<i>Claire Amitié</i>
Kojoukhovski Mikhail	<i>Conference of European Churches</i>
Kölln Rodríguez Silvia María	<i>Uruguay</i>
Kuběnová Hana	<i>Czech Republic</i>
Lago Martín Elena María	<i>Schönstatt</i>
Lamanna Carla	<i>Italy</i>
Langer Arianna	<i>AGESCI</i>
Lapka Claudia	<i>Austria</i>
Lema Guaman Blanca María	<i>MIJARC</i>
Lenkiewicz Michał	<i>Poland</i>
Leproux Marie-Béatrice	<i>Foyers de Charité</i>
Letsoela Magdalene	<i>Lesotho</i>
Limodo Inês John	<i>Mozambique</i>
Llazi Esmaina	<i>Albania</i>
Lo Chi Fan	<i>Macau</i>
Lordes Dias Vinicius	<i>ICCRS</i>
Lupeanu Corina Maria	<i>Romania</i>
Macevičiūtė Dalia	<i>Lithuania</i>
Macuiane Paulo Jaime	<i>Mozambique</i>
Madombi Susan	<i>Zimbabwe</i>
Madrigal Alejandro	<i>USA.</i>
Makhmudov Ruslan	<i>Kazakhstan</i>
Mamaliga Octavian	<i>Moldova</i>
Manache Aline	<i>Syria</i>
Manfreda Emanuela	<i>Italy</i>
Mardjonović Bruna	<i>Yugoslavia</i>
Marset Juan Francisco Efrén	<i>Teresian Association</i>
Martyn Julian Rajiv	<i>Pax Christi International</i>
McGarrity Claire Irene	<i>Scotland</i>
Medecin Marie-Pierre	<i>Monaco</i>
Medel Rezusta Francisco Javier	<i>JICI</i>
Medernach Richard M.	<i>Canada</i>
Melendez Coria José Luís	<i>Mexico</i>
Méndez i Andrés Natàlia	<i>IMCS -Pax Romana</i>
Mhlanga June	<i>Swaziland</i>
Mikalef Michele	<i>Greece</i>
Mikeln Petra	<i>Slovenia</i>
Mironchenko Aliciya	<i>Turkmenistan</i>

Mivšek Mitja	<i>Emmanuel Community</i>
Monti Paolo	<i>Italy</i>
Motjoli Christopher	<i>Lesotho</i>
Mtilatila George	<i>Malawi</i>
Mutiso Cosmas Kaloki	<i>Kenya</i>
Mutolo Andrea	<i>Opera di Nàzaret</i>
Näscher Philipp	<i>Liechtenstein</i>
Nassar Alice	<i>FIMCAP</i>
Nau Joseph	<i>Haiti</i>
Nget Viney	<i>Cambodia</i>
Ngo Huong Giang	<i>Vietnam</i>
Nikogosova Kristina	<i>Georgia</i>
Nzamba Thierry	<i>Gabon</i>
O'Neil Mark	<i>Australia</i>
Ontibon Echeverri Claudia Beatriz	<i>Colombia</i>
Opata Peter Paul	<i>Uganda</i>
Oriol Irina	<i>Moldova</i>
Ornano Jaén Eugenio	<i>Panama</i>
Ortega Armijos Yadira Fernanda	<i>Ecuador</i>
Ottosen-Stoett Nikolaj	<i>Denmark</i>
Ouedraogo D. David Armel	<i>Burkina Faso</i>
Ouendeno André Yamba	<i>Guinea</i>
Ovalle Pellecer Guillermo Arturo	<i>Guatemala</i>
Pacheco Jara Antonieta	<i>Peru</i>
Padilla Arlene Marina	<i>Encuentros of Youth Promotion</i>
Palla Alessandro	<i>Neocatecumenal Way</i>
Palladino Emilia	<i>Rinnovamento nello Spirito Santo</i>
Parrado Flores Gissela Roxana	<i>Bolivia</i>
Pérez Martín María	<i>M.T.A.</i>
Petrelli Evangelina Monica	<i>Salesian Youth Movement - FMA</i>
Pezzarossi Rodriguez Lucía Paola	<i>Guatemala</i>
Pham Thi Lien	<i>Vietnam</i>
Picado Diaz Brenda del Socorro	<i>Nicaragua</i>
Pierre Sylvie	<i>CIJOC</i>
Piotrowska Stanislaw	<i>Poland</i>
Pizarro Brandling Pinto Basto Sara	<i>Youth of Our Lady</i>
Pizzinat Anna	<i>World Confederation "Ex Allieve/i Figlie Maria Ausiliatrice"</i>

List of Delegates

Placer Fleitas Daylin	<i>Marian Youth (Vincentian)</i>
Popescu Magdalena	<i>Romania</i>
Popík Peter	<i>Slovakia</i>
Potani Mercy	<i>Malawi</i>
Pradhan Raju	<i>Nepal</i>
Priest Alice	<i>Australia</i>
Pugh Laura	<i>England & Wales</i>
Queirós Pinto Pedro Miguel	<i>CIJOC</i>
Ramiadana Julien	<i>Madagascar</i>
Ramirez Saucedo Carmen Edaly	<i>Mexico</i>
Ramirez Hernandez Damarys Maria	<i>Nicaragua</i>
Randrianarisoa Bodo Tahina	<i>Comoros</i>
Raphael Koba Georgina	<i>Sudan</i>
Razanamahefa Désirée Marie Stella	<i>Madagascar</i>
Reyes Liscano Carmen Amelia	<i>Venezuela</i>
Ricciotti Ingrid	<i>Gioventù Francescana</i>
Richardson Christine	<i>Bangladesh</i>
Rimmaudo Salvatore	<i>ICCS</i>
Robledo Patricia	<i>Comunidad Misionera de Cristo</i> <i>Resucitado</i>
Rocchi Gianna	<i>Youth for a United World (Focolari)</i>
Rodrigues Tutul Peter	<i>Bangladesh</i>
Roule Tomáš	<i>Czech Republic</i>
Rovira Quesada Carolina	<i>Opera di Nàzaret</i>
Rualo Francisco Valentin	<i>Philippines</i>
Ruiz Diaz Manuel Antonio	<i>Colombia</i>
Ruzzante Gilberto	<i>Salesian Youth Movement - SDB</i>
Samir Azer Rania	<i>Youth Eucharistic Movement</i>
Sanon K. Ursule Viviane	<i>Burkina Faso</i>
Santhanawit Nattaporn	<i>Thailand</i>
Santini Sara	<i>Italy</i>
Santoro Anna	<i>Italy</i>
Santos Borba José Leonardo	<i>Brazil</i>
Sarr Léonie	<i>Senegal</i>
Sauer Catherine	<i>Luxembourg</i>
Sauer Dennys	<i>Communion and Liberation</i>
Savrio Ayik Uokwon Paskale	<i>Sudan</i>
Schaden Susanne	<i>Austria</i>

Scialanga Claudia	<i>Faith and Light - International</i>
Seigneur Ségolène	<i>Beatitudes Community</i>
Shyngle Mbisin Anna	<i>Gambia</i>
Sirulik Viktoriya	<i>Turkmenistan</i>
Skoče Stipe	<i>Yugoslavia</i>
Snyman Frans	<i>Namibia</i>
Somé Athanase	<i>Algeria</i>
Sonwa Denis Jean	<i>IMCS - Pax Romana</i>
Sorribas Fierro Mario	<i>Spain</i>
Soumaoro Bernadette Zogbili	<i>Guinea</i>
Stancu Adina	<i>International Forum of Catholic Action</i>
Steinke Daniel Maria	<i>Beatitudes Community</i>
Stellino Dario	<i>Italy</i>
Stevanus Wijiantoro Stevanus	<i>Indonesia</i>
Suarez Cardenas Innaris	<i>St. Egidio Community</i>
Sun Ka Lok Magdalene	<i>Hong Kong</i>
Sund Munkherdene	<i>Mongolia</i>
Suon Hangly	<i>Cambodia</i>
Süveges Gergö	<i>Hungary</i>
Süveges Margit	<i>Hungary</i>
Tan Yih Soo, Aloysius	<i>IYCS</i>
Tankoano Soan Guimpali Timothée	<i>Morocco</i>
Tannousis Michael	<i>Cyprus</i>
Tašev Dimitar	<i>Macedonia</i>
Tavares Ribeiro da Costa Augusto Borges	<i>Portugal</i>
Tejada Isadodelis	<i>USA.</i>
Tellechea Carvajal Luis Omar	<i>Venezuela</i>
Temcharoen Narudee	<i>Thailand</i>
Tersigni Marta	<i>Centro Volontari della Sofferenza</i>
Theisen Ute	<i>Germany</i>
Thesenvitz Dirk	<i>Conference of European Churches</i>
Thielemann Elisabeth	<i>Norway</i>
Thiombiano D-Ludovic Parfait	<i>Foundations for a New World</i>
Torres Norambuena Fernando Robinson	<i>Chile</i>
Traore Brigitte	<i>Claire Amitié</i>
Trejos Espinoza María Valeria	<i>Christian Life Movement</i>
Uhm Ki-Ho	<i>Korea</i>

List of Delegates

Ushkalov Sergo	<i>Georgia</i>
Vakameilalo-Kioa Cecilia	<i>New Zealand</i>
Valdez René	<i>Bolivia</i>
Valeeva Anna	<i>Kyrgyzstan</i>
Vamvakaris Eleuterio	<i>Greece</i>
Vandermersch Zoé	<i>Famille de l'Assomption</i>
Vargas Paredes Ana Cecilia	<i>IYCS</i>
Vázquez Maldonado Mariny del Rosario	<i>Puerto Rico</i>
Verhaevert Jo	<i>Belgium</i>
Vito Pierluigi	<i>Azione Cattolica Italiana</i>
Vonhögen Mayke	<i>Netherlands</i>
Wangwor Jagire Hope	<i>Zambia</i>
Wansetto Rosilene	<i>Brazil</i>
Wijayanto Felix Iwan	<i>Indonesia</i>
Yelekessa Nkouzou Larissa Gwladys	<i>Congo</i>
Zafirov Martin	<i>Bulgaria</i>
Zako Joyce	<i>Uganda</i>
Zaldaña Funes Manuel Alfredo	<i>El Salvador</i>
Zborek Joanna Agnieszka	<i>Chemin Neuf Community</i>
Zezei Boniface	<i>Zimbabwe</i>

(Total: 311 delegates)

Guests

ANTILLES	<i>Sr. Patricia Ann Douglas</i> – National Youth Director
AUSTRIA	Fr. <i>Franz Herz</i> , National Youth Director
CANADA	Fr. <i>Thomas Rosica</i> , Director of the Canadian Committee for WYD 2002
CANADA	<i>Jim O'Hara</i> , Canadian Committee for WYD 2002
CANADA	<i>Larissa Gray</i> , Canadian Committee for WYD 2002
CANADA	<i>Robert Mignella</i> , Canadian Committee for WYD 2002
CANADA	<i>Raymond J. De Souza</i> , Correspondent for the <i>National Catholic Register</i>
COLOMBIA	Fr. <i>Armélím De Sousa Andrade</i> , Executive Secretary of CELAM - SEJ
CUBA	<i>Liana del Carmen Lorigados Pedre</i> , National Youth Director
ENGLAND	<i>Margaret Connolly</i> , National Youth Director
ISRAEL	Fr. <i>Elie Kurzum</i> , National Youth Director
KENYA	Fr. <i>David A. Lemkubl</i> , National Youth Director
MONGOLIA	Fr. <i>Pierre Kasemuana</i> , National Youth Director
PORTUGAL	<i>Manuel Oliveira de Sousa</i> , National Youth Director
ROMANIA	<i>Sr. Liana Antonia Petrizzo</i> , National Secretary for the Youth Jubilee
SPAIN	<i>Victor Cortizo</i> , National Youth Director
SWITZERLAND	Fr. <i>Aldo Giordano</i> , Secretary General, European Bishops' Conference
USA	<i>Ana Villamil</i> , National Youth Director

Countries and Regions represented at the Forum

Albania	Georgia	Mauritius
Algeria	Germany	Mexico
Angola	Ghana	Moldova
Antilles	Greece	Monaco
Argentina	Guam (Pacific)	Mongolia
Australia	Guatemala	Morocco
Austria	Guinea	Mozambique
Bangladesh	Haiti	Namibia
Belgium	Honduras	Nepal
Benin	Hong Kong	Netherlands
Bolivia	Hungary	New Zealand
Brazil	India	Nicaragua
Bulgaria	Indonesia	Nigeria
Burkina Faso	Ireland	Norway
Cambodia	Israel	Pakistan
Canada	Italy	Palestinian Territories
Chad	Japan	Panama
Chile	Jordan	Papua New Guinea
Colombia	Kazakhstan	Paraguay
Comoros	Kenya	Peru
Congo	Korea	Philippines
Croatia	Kyrgyzstan	Poland
Cuba	Latvia	Portugal
Cyprus	Lebanon	Puerto Rico
Czech Republic	Lesotho	Reunion (France)
Denmark	Liberia	Romania
Dominican Republic	Liechtenstein	Scotland
Ecuador	Lithuania	Senegal
El Salvador	Luxembourg	Seychelles
England & Wales	Macau	Slovakia
Finland	Macedonia	Slovenia
France	Madagascar	South Africa
Gabon	Malawi	Spain
Gambia	Malta	Sudan

Countries and Regions represented at the Forum

Swaziland	Turkmenistan	Yugoslavia
Sweden	Uganda	Zambia
Switzerland	Ukraine	Zimbabwe
Syria	Uruguay	
Taiwan	USA	
Thailand	Venezuela	
Turkey	Vietnam	(Total: 119)

International Youth Movements, Associations and Communities represented at the Forum

ACISJF - International Catholic Society for Girls
AGESCI - Associazione Guide e Scout Cattolici Italiani
Azione Cattolica Italiana - Settore Giovani
Beatitudes Community
Centro Volontari della Sofferenza
Chemin Neuf Community
Christian Life Movement
CIJOC - International Coordination of Young Christian Workers
Claire Amitié
Communion and Liberation
Comunidad Misionera de Cristo Resucitado
Conference of European Churches
Emmanuel Community
Encuentros of Youth Promotion
Faith and Light - International
Famille de l'Assomption
FIMCAP - International Federation of Catholic Parochial Youth Movements
Foundations for a New World
Foyers de Charité
Franciscan Youth
ICCG - International Catholic Conference of Guiding
ICCRS - International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services
ICCS – International Catholic Conference of Scouting
IMCS Pax Romana – International Movement of Catholic Students
International Forum of Catholic Action
IUGSE – International Union of Guides and Scouts of Europe
IYCS – International Young Catholic Students
Jeunesse Lumiere
JICI – International Independent Christian Youth
M.T.A. Apostolate of the Teresian Movement

Marian Youth (Vincentian)

MIJARC (IMCARY) – International Movement of Catholic Agricultural and Rural Youth

Neocatecumenal Way

OMAAEEC Youth – World Organization of Former Pupils of Catholic Education

Opera di Nazaret

Pax Christi International – Youth Forum

Regnum Christi

Rinnovamento nello Spirito Santo

Salesian Youth Movement – FMA

Salesian Youth Movement – SDB

Schonstatt

St. Egidio Community

Taize Community

Teresian Association

World Confederation “ Ex Allieve/i Figlie Maria Ausiliatrice ”

Youth Eucharistic Movement

Youth of Our Lady

Youth for a United World (Focolari)

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PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE LAITY

Offices: Piazza San Calisto, 16 (Trastevere) Rome

Tel. 06.698.87322 - Fax 06.698.87214

Postal Address: Palazzo San Calisto

00120 Città del Vaticano

E-mail: pcpl@laity.va

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