



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO YOUNG PEOPLE GATHERED IN THE VATICAN BASILICA

Wednesday, 3 January 1979

Dear Young People, As in the past weeks, large numbers of young people belonging to Catholic Associations or to groups that collaborate with their own parish priests, are present at this meeting with the Pope. I see present also many Sisters who have come to Rome to take part in the Meeting of the Italian Federation of Sister Educators, and a great many pilgrimages are also participating, among which special mention should go to the one from the diocese of Molfetta, led by its own Bishop. To all of them I address my hearty welcome, my affectionate greeting and my warm thanks for their visit. The delightful liturgical season, which started with the Holy Night, gives us the possibility of reflecting on some aspect of the mystery of the Word Incarnate; and today we wish to focus our attention on the Family of Nazareth, whose feast we have recently celebrated. A holy family, that of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, particularly because of the holiness of him for whom it was formed into a human family, so that we may recognize in it elements characteristic of so many other families. As it is pointed out to us by the Gospel, this family is really poor, both at the moment of the birth of the Son of God, and in the period of exile in Egypt which was forced on it, and in Nazareth where it lives modestly on the work of its own hands. In Jesus, Mary and Joseph there is an admirable example of human solidarity and communion with all other families, as well as of integration in the wider human context, which is society. Every other human family must refer to that divine model, and live together with it, in order to solve the problems, not easy ones, of married and family life. These problems, deep and acute, need to be tackled with united and responsible action. As at Nazareth, so in every family, God becomes present and takes his place in human events. The family, in fact, which is the union of a man and a woman, is by its nature geared to the procreation of new men, who are accompanied in their existence by means of diligent educational work in their physical, but particularly spiritual and moral growth. The family is, therefore, the privileged place and the sanctuary in which is developed the whole great and deep event of each unrepeatable human person. Fundamental duties are, therefore, incumbent on the family, the generous exercise of which cannot but enrich deeply those who are mainly responsible for the family itself, making them more direct collaborators with God in the formation of new men. That is why the family is irreplaceable and, as such, must be defended with might and main. Everything must be done in order that the family will not be replaced. That is necessary not only for the "private" good of every person, but also for the common good of every society, nation and state. The family is set at the very centre of common good in its various dimensions, precisely because man is conceived and born in it. Everything possible must be done in order that this human being may be desired, awaited, experienced as a particular, unique, and unrepeatable value, right from the beginning, from the moment of his conception. He must feel that he is important, useful, dear and of great value, even if

infirm or handicapped; even dearer, in fact, for this reason. This is the teaching that springs from the mystery of Incarnation. I wish to present a last consideration to your reflection, starting from the distressing difficulty—a tormenting one for a mother—in which Mary finds herself, being unable to offer a roof to the child who is about to be born. The great mysterious event of motherhood in so many women may bring forth motives of suffering, doubt and temptation. The generous "yes", that the woman must say to the life that has blossomed in her womb—a "yes", often accompanied by fear of a thousand difficulties—always involves an inner act of trust in God and of confidence in the new man that is about to be born. With a brotherly sense of charity and solidarity, we must never leave alone, especially if she is hesitant and doubtful, a woman who is preparing to give birth to a new man who will be, for each of us, a new brother. We must endeavour to give her all the help necessary in her situation: we must support her and offer her courage and hope. At the beginning of this new year I express to everyone my heartiest wishes for all happiness, while I willingly invoke the protection of the Lord on everyone, and impart the Apostolic Blessing. Let a thought of good wishes for the new year now go also to all those who are suffering in body and in spirit. Rest assured that the Pope is always beside you with his prayer and with his fatherly tenderness: with that tenderness that Jesus had for the many infirm persons who were presented to him during his public life, and whom he comforted by curing them and by proclaiming the glad news of salvation (cf. Lk 4: 18). May my special Blessing be of comfort and support. Allow me finally to address a special New Year greeting to the newly-weds. Beloved sons, if you want the year just begun to be a really good one, let your new families be deeply pervaded by unbreakable love, rock-like unity, and those Christian virtues which form the happiness and dignity of the domestic hearth which you have just lit. I willingly invoke the continual assistance of God on your new-born family, in order that, as he has united you in the bond of conjugal love, so he may keep you in it forever, to your mutual joy and for the glory of God the Father. © Copyright 1979 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana