



# The Holy See

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## ***ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO A GROUP OF PILGRIMS FROM ALASKA***

*Saturday, 13 March 1982*

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

I am pleased to welcome all of you here this morning. It is just a little over a year ago that you greeted me in the snow-covered city of Anchorage. On that occasion I invited your choir to visit me in Rome, and I am happy that you accepted to come and that you will sing tomorrow in Saint Peter's Basilica. I thank Archbishop Hurley for organizing the visit and for expanding the group to include everyone present. For me you represent all the people of Alaska.

You come here today as pilgrims on a journey of faith. Because of this I exhort you in the words of Saint Paul: "Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (*Eph. 5, 2*).

The season of Lent that we are observing is a special time of pilgrimage, a time of walking in Christ's love. In Lent we recall the journey of the Jewish people through the desert to the Promised Land. In Lent we relive the events of Christ's Passion, his way of the Cross, through which our sins are remitted and our salvation is achieved.

Throughout these forty days, pilgrims here in Rome continue the venerable custom of visiting the station churches. This practice finds part of its meaning in the fact that the participants make a pilgrimage to different churches or basilicas. Your journey bears a similar religious character, and for this reason I pray that it will be for each of you a real journey of faith, a search for what fosters, strengthens and deepens your faith in Christ.

To set out on pilgrimage means leaving many things behind. When you travel, only the essentials can be taken along. You must choose just those items which are indispensable, otherwise as a

traveler you become weighed down with too much baggage.

I am happy to know that among the things you deemed essential for this pilgrimage to Rome were music and song - joyful sound and a new song of hope and of promise. So often the people of our world are bombarded by the clamoring noises of a modern technology that dull the senses and sadden the human spirit. There are the cries of violence and despair, the voices of consumerism and greed, and the strident demands of excessive individualism.

But your song brings hope when it is founded in Christ, nourished by prayer and inspired by love of neighbor. This is the sound that the world needs to hear - it is a vitally important contribution that you make on your pilgrim way.

Eventually your pilgrimage will take you back home to begin anew the life's work to which God has called you. As you return, know that the prayers of the Pope go with you.

When I was in Alaska, among those who greeted me was a five-year-old girl, little Mollie Marie, who reached out and handed me a bouquet of forget-me-nots. Recently I was informed that this little girl died shortly after Christmas; her brief earthly pilgrimage has ended. Let me assure you that the Pope will not forget: he will not forget this child and he will not forget you. You are remembered in my prayers; you are in my heart. We are all pilgrims on our way home to our heavenly Father. Let us walk in the way of love. Let us walk with faith. Let us walk in Christ Jesus.

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