



# The Holy See

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APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA AND ASTURIAS

ON THE OCCASION OF FOURTH WORLD YOUTH DAY

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE SICK AND DISABLED**

*Saturday, 19 August 1989*

*Beloved Brothers and Sisters,*

1. On this significant day on which so many young men and women of the entire world, gathered together in Santiago de Compostela or in the most remote parts of the earth, join with the Pope *to celebrate Christ the Redeemer*, you constitute the centre of attention of the Church, because suffering places you especially *close to Christ*; furthermore, it makes you *living Christ* in the midst of the world, since *the suffering individual is the way of the Church* because that person is, first of all, the way of Christ himself, who is the Good Samaritan who 'did not pass by' but who 'had compassion and went to him and bound up his wounds... and took care of him' (Lk 10:32-34)" (*Christifideles Laici*, 53).

For this reason I feel a special pastoral satisfaction in coming here to greet you - I would like to greet each one of you personally - to speak about your situation, to encourage you, bless you and to let all other men and women see *what you are and what you mean* for the whole of humanity.

I appreciate the expressive way in which your representative has pointed out your desires and indeed your acceptance of God's will; expressions and testimonies which are summarized in the book which you have just given me.

I would also like to show my appreciation for the sentiments of closeness and solidarity with those who are sick or disabled expressed by a young person of your own age.

In your sickness not only are you privileged in the sight of God but, by means of it, it is you who can ask and help the youth of the world to find Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life. At a time when the Cross is hidden away, your acceptance of it makes you witnesses of the fact that Jesus Christ wanted to embrace it for our

salvation.

2. *Young sick and disabled people!* Precisely in the most beautiful period of life, characterized in man by a particular vigour and dynamism, you find yourselves weak and without the strength necessary to carry out so many activities which the other boys and girls of your own age can do.

In effect, many people of your age have come on foot today to Monte del Gozo — the Mount of Joy — where we will meet this evening. You are not in a position to walk, but — we could say it in a paradox — you have arrived before anyone at the "*mount of joy*". Yes, because Calvary, where Jesus died and rose again and where you are with him, is, *looked at with the eyes of faith, the mount of joy, the hill of perfect happiness, the summit of hope.*

Because I have personally experienced it, I also know the suffering which physical incapacity causes, the weakness that comes with sickness, the lack of energy for work, the feeling of being unable to lead a normal life. However, I also know — and I wish that you also may see it — that this suffering has another sublime characteristic: it gives a great spiritual capacity, because suffering is a purification both for oneself and for others. If it is lived with a Christian outlook it can become a gift offered so as to complete in one's own flesh "what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is the Church" (*Col 1:24*).

Thus, suffering makes sanctity possible, since it offers great apostolic opportunities and it has an exceptional salvific value when it is united with the sufferings of Christ.

The *evangelizing strength which suffering has* cannot be measured. So, when I call all the Christian faithful to the great missionary task of carrying out a new evangelization, I have in mind that in the front line will be, as exceptional spreaders of the Gospel, the sick, *young sick people*. "*The sick are sent as labourers into the Lord's vineyard*". This is because "the weight that wearies the body's members and dissipates the soul's serenity is far from dispensing a person from working in the vineyard. Instead the sick are called to live their human and Christian vocation and to participate in the growth of the Kingdom of God in a new and even more valuable manner" (*Christifideles Laici*, 53).

4. In the Apostolic Letter "*Salvifici Doloris*" I have spoken at length of the *Christian meaning of suffering* and I have referred to some of the ideas already expressed. I would like this Letter to be a *guide* for your life, so that you would always contemplate your situation in the light of the Gospel, fixing your gaze on *Christ crucified*, who is Lord of life, the Lord of our health and our sicknesses and Master of our destinies.

In offering to Our Lord your limited strength, you are *the treasure of the Church, the energy reserve for its task of evangelization*. You are the expression of an ineffable wisdom, which can only be learned through suffering. "It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your

statutes" (Ps 118:71). Through suffering life becomes deeper, more understanding, more humble, more sincere, more united, more generous. In sickness we better understand that our existence is gratuitous and that health is an immense gift of God.

My beloved friends in suffering, through pain you will discover more easily, and you will teach other people to discover Jesus Christ "*Way, Truth and Life*". Look at Our Lord, the Man of Sorrows. Centre your attention on *Jesus* who, *young like you*, by his death on the Cross, helped man see the inestimable value of life, which necessarily brings with it the acceptance of the will of God the Father.

5. Before ending this meeting, I wish now to address all those people who, through family ties of their professional work in the area of health or human and social care, are in continuous contact with our beloved young sick people.

I appreciate the generosity, and at times abnegation, with which you try to create a welcoming, peaceful family environment around these people who are living images of the suffering Christ. You feel the obligation to carry out your work as a true service, of brother to brother. You know well that a sick person does not only seek relief in his suffering or limitations, but also the help of a brother or sister, who is capable of understanding his state of soul and of helping him to accept himself as he is and to better himself in his daily life.

To achieve this faith is fundamental, a faith which permits you to see in the sick person the friendly face of Christ. Did he not say: "I was sick and you visited me" (Mt 25 :36)? In this Christian framework your service, at times long and tiresome, has an inestimable value before society and, above all, before the Lord.

I bless you, beloved sick and disabled people, with my greatest affection. This Blessing I joyfully extend to your loved ones, and to all those who look after you and accompany you, whether spiritually, humanly or medically.

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