



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MEMBERS OF VARIOUS EUROPEAN
YOUTH GROUPS AND MOVEMENTS**

Thursday, 2 September 2004

- Message of European Christian Youth

Dear Young Friends,

1. It is my pleasure to welcome you and I fondly greet you. I thank you from my heart for your presence here and this important sign of communion. I especially thank the young woman who spoke on behalf of everyone.

The "Declaration of European Christian Youth" that you have come to consign to me is a fruit of the recent European youth pilgrimage to the tomb of James the Apostle in Santiago de Compostela, a significant meeting point, thanks to which Europeans throughout the past centuries have learned to know and reciprocally accept one another, thereby contributing to the development of Europe.

2. *Witnesses of Christ in order to build a Europe of hope.* This is the message that you want to broadcast to your contemporaries and to the entire European community of today. The dream alive in your heart is one of a Europe proud of its rich cultural and religious patrimony and at the same time sensitive to the values of humanity and life, solidarity and openness, justice and peace.

You are not ashamed of the Gospel and know well that the civilization of love is constructed by discovering *new syntheses between Gospel and culture*, not by separating them.

You intend to follow this path in order to create a Continent *rich above all in values*, keeping

history in mind so as to not forget past errors and, what is more, to strengthen one's own spiritual roots.

3. To fulfil this mission, faithfulness to Christ and his Church is necessary, along with coherence and courage to the point of the heroism of sanctity. This is the itinerary followed by the saints of Europe of the past centuries. May their witness be an incentive for each one of you, dear young people, listening to me by radio or television.

May the Virgin Mary protect you, she who throughout the centuries has welcomed into the humble house of Loreto countless pilgrims from all corners of Europe.

The Pope joins in your prayer; and while he encourages you to openly witness to Christ, he imparts upon you all his heartfelt Blessing.

MESSAGE OF EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN YOUTH, PILGRIMS TO SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA 2004

"Europe: find yourself again! Be yourself!"

(John Paul II, *A Declaration to Europe*, Santiago de Compostela, 9 November 1982; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition [ORE], 29 November, p. 6)

"Young people: courageously set about building the Europe of hope, faithful to its own roots, the land of acceptance, solidarity and peace for all"

(*Prayer Vigil for Youth*, Loreto, Italy, 9 September 1995, n. 5; ORE, 13 September, p. 21)

Our journey

We have come as pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela from various countries of Europe. Together, we have reflected on *being witnesses of Christ for a Europe of hope*.

We have done so in a place that is at the root of the European identity: peoples have met at James the Apostle's tomb and have learned to know one another and live side-by-side.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, in 1948, thousands of young people from all over Europe met here, united by the same faith, to dream together of a future of peace.

Many of their dreams have come true; others have yet to be fulfilled.

We accept this inheritance in order to give a Christian soul to the process of European integration.

This is why we are convinced that young people should be given credit and permitted to be the protagonists of the Continent's development, and that room should be made for them to assume responsibilities in political, social, financial and ecclesial life.

We want a welcoming, supportive, respectful, understanding Europe, one that is capable of integration; a Europe that works for peace and freedom and is aware of its own past.

We are thinking of a Europe founded on the values of generosity and self-giving, of interiority and the sincere search for the truth.

We believe in the centrality of personal dignity, we seek respect for the right to life, we believe that the development of every individual must take place in a real family.

We maintain that these values should be protected from the threat of individualism, consumerism, ethical relativism and superficiality.

Steps to be taken

The Europe of the future faces many challenges. As young Christians we feel that some of these call us into question in a particular way.

Mobility and intercultural dialogue

We live in an ever smaller world, in which we move rapidly and exchange culture and training in new and original forms of communication. Many young people travel for study or work; others for tourism; yet others go in search of a "promised land".

We do not want this to be an occasion for confusion or conflict, but to provide an opportunity for self-appraisal by comparing ourselves with others.

We believe it is necessary to build a "European" culture, to be able to collaborate with the nations on the Continent and initiate dialogue with the cultures of the East and of the South of the world. We undertake to welcome every person and to make the most of the opportunities available to us for contact with others, as well as to create new networks of relations to help overcome cultural barriers, developing reciprocal understanding through the media of art, music, sport, religion.

Education, formation, occupation

Well-tested and positive experiences of student exchanges exist that give a glimpse of a future Continent-wide educational system. We also recognize the tendency to greater mobility of young workers across Europe.

We would like a common market of free ideas and access within a scholastic educational system that can develop the whole person, in the human, cultural, social and spiritual dimensions, and that can accompany young people in the new forms of access to employment.

Let us strive to further a culture of human and Christian values, to increase European knowledge in the educational environment and to become educators for the future generations.

The family

In the experience of many young people the family has a fundamental role as a nucleus of stability and a school of values for their own personal growth. Whereas, others often painfully experience the instability of their emotional ties.

We would like a Europe in which children can grow up in a serene environment, guaranteed and encouraged by appropriate family policies that are particularly attentive to young newly-married couples.

As citizens, we wish to protect the family founded on marriage; as children, let us strive to live it as a place of respectful coexistence between the generations; as young people, let us learn to appreciate the value of reciprocal attention staked on responsibility for others and for the community in which we live.

Citizenship and participation

The European Union, which is the result of a fruitful political endeavour, has made it possible to harmonize the economic and juridical systems of very different countries. May the involvement of European citizens and especially of young people "from the bottom level", be consistently promoted.

We shall endeavour to overcome an individualistic approach to human rights, to recognize, develop and appreciate the presence of individuals in those intermediate realities of social participation (families, associations, religious communities, organizations) that are places in which democracy is tested and matures.

Peace and development

The desire for peace which has given birth to the European Union is still its goal today. We young Europeans know that our decisions influence the present and future of the rest of the inhabitants of the globe.

We want the person and his or her dignity always to be at the centre of the processes of social, economic, cultural and environmental development, in a Europe that promotes peace and justice

on the world scene.

Let us try to adopt sustainable lifestyles and learn to manage conflicts without violence. Let us profit by the experiences of volunteer work and international cooperation that can contribute to the formation of new European citizens.

Information

We young Europeans have more and more possibilities open to us and many means of accessing information. However, certain problems arise: from the lack of European information to the ineffective protection of freedom and truth, in the name of economic, political or nationalistic interests.

We want transparency in information, in the media and in relations between the public institutions and citizens, which helps us to feel like Europeans.

We shall try to use the media to create the necessary spaces for critical analysis of information received and to encourage access to all that leads to greater knowledge of the situations of the other countries on the continent.

Travelling companions

As we face these vast prospects, we feel the need to ask for the company of our peers and of people of good will, to whom we propose:

To other young Christians

Be glad to be Christians!

As the Apostle James said, be witnesses of Christ in deed and in word, living with joy in the Church and helping her to keep up with the times.

Prepare yourselves seriously, with prayer, study, personal involvement, to be an important presence in the neighbourhood, in the parish, in associations, in the world of work.

Without fear or complexes, be "young people in the Church, Christians in the world".

To all other young people

Together and without prejudices, we can bring about a "peaceful revolution" to build a more democratic, more just Europe, one that is an expression of civil society.

We suggest that you put the person at the centre of every project, believing in and staking everything on his or her full development.

We offer Christ to you as a reference and model of life, who can give meaning to your existence and satisfy your thirst for happiness.

To adults

Do not be afraid of being adults!

We need people to guide us and to be examples of life.

Let us establish a dialogue in order to share our experiences and hopes, to collaborate together, conscious of the fact that it will be we who carry forward the building of Europe.

We ask you to trust young people and to support us, allowing our youth to challenge you.

We know that the other continents are looking to Europe and to its young people, awaiting a courageous response to the challenges that the third millennium proposes to humanity.

We feel that with the help of God, we can build a Europe of hope, responding to Christ's call with the same enthusiasm as the Apostle James: *We can do it!*

Monte do Gozo

7 August 2004