

Mary Calls the Pilgrim to Reconciliation

Lourdes, France (NC) — Following is excerpted from an NC News translation of the Vatican text of Pope John Paul II's French-language address to pilgrims at the grotto at Lourdes on Aug. 14.

Blessed be God! Yes, blessed be God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who has prepared here such a place of prayer, for the Bigorre region and the Pyrenees, for France, for the entire Church — a place of gatherings of believers and of reconciliation! Blessed be God who for 125 years has caused to gush forth, together with the little spring of Massabielle, a living spring where faith is refreshed, where bodies and souls are healed, where the sense of the Church is reinforced! Blessed be God who realized this once again through the Virgin Mary, who draws crowds here, as she drew Bernadette, to lead them to Christ! Blessed be Our Lady, who obtains so many graces for us and who has permitted me myself, after an attempt upon my life from which I was saved, to come here at last, to draw in my turn upon the sources, and here to assemble the faithful, according to the mission of the universal pastor entrusted to the apostle Peter.

What message, what good news to utter to you this very evening, to give an orientation to all our movements?

I will simply say: The virgin without sin comes to the aid of sinners.

The Virgin, Our Lady of Lourdes! Tomorrow we shall celebrate her in her raised-up glory, associated body and soul with the heavenly life of her son: the woman clothed with the divine life as with the sun and crowned with stars, to speak as the Book of Revelation speaks. To Bernadette Soubirous she indeed appeared radiant with that bliss, but she called to mind, rather, the young girl of the Annunciation, youthful, ever youthful, more youthful than sin, as was well conveyed to our understanding by one of your writers, Georges Bernanos. She evoked the preludes of the incarnation of Christ, preparation for his coming through baptism and penance, Advent. And she above all recalled the grace of her own Immaculate Conception, which had made her the precursor sign of mankind redeemed by Christ, preserving her from original sin — that is to say, from that separation from God which touches all humans at birth and leaves a tendency in their hearts toward suspicion, distrust, disobedience, revolt, rupture with that God who has never ceased from loving them. The Virgin was from the first in a relation of love with God.



The Pope

Why then did she choose this face and this name for revealing herself here?

Let us say frankly: Our world has need of conversion. In every age that is the case. In the middle of the 19th century that need showed in a particular fashion, in the unbelief of certain scientific circles, in the view of certain philosophies, or in practical living. Today the very sense of sin has partly disappeared because the sense of God is being lost. There has been an idea of constructing a humanism without God, and the faith is ceaselessly in danger of appearing to be the peculiarity of a few, without a necessary role for the salvation of all. Consciences are darkened, as on the occasion of the first sin, and no longer distinguish good and evil. Many no longer know what sin is or no longer dare know, as if such knowledge were going to alienate their freedom. And yet, what admirable efforts do not our contemporaries make to expand and develop the human capacities which God has given them and to create better living conditions for themselves and for others! But it remains difficult to convince this world of the misery of its own sin and to convince it of the salvation which God ceaselessly offers it in the reconciliation obtained through the redemption.

Here is the whole enterprise which the Church has undertaken in this Jubilee Year of the Redemption.

Well, the Virgin without sin here reminds us of a primordial need. She tells us, as she told Bernadette: Pray for sinners, come and wash, cleanse yourselves, draw upon a new life. "Be converted and believe in the Gospel." She gives a fresh actuality to those earliest words of Jesus in the Gospel (Mk. 1:15).

For if Mary indeed represents the enemy of Satan, the contrary of sin, she here shows herself to be the friend of sinners, like Christ, "the holy one of God," who ate and lived among them. It is the good news which she repeats to this world, to each of us. It is possible, it is beneficial, it is vital to find, to rediscover the path of God.

Yes, awareness of sin is possible, along with awareness of the merciful love of God, or rather, thanks to him, for it is he who changes the heart of the sinner and makes it lucid and repentant. It is not humiliating, it is not traumatizing, it is liberating. Pride alone might be the obstacle. And Bernadette remembered throughout her life what Mary had proclaimed in her Magnificat: "He has looked upon his servant in her lowliness... He has raised the lowly." Apparently obstacles to conversion, interior and exterior obstacles, might seem to be unsurmountable today. But all

things are possible with God. It is a matter of a gift from God which we are going to ask for. It goes like the spring which arose unexpectedly between the fingers of Bernadette and will not cease flowing. There is a need to bathe in it. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they may become white as snow." And it is necessary to dispose oneself to it by humility, acts of penitence, prayer, requests for pardon. There is no other way. That is what the prophets who preceded Christ prophesied, John the Baptist especially; it is what Christ himself affirmed; it is what the Church and Mary repeat as they bring us his message; it is what Bernadette transmits to us so simply and faithfully.

This effort at conversion and penance is especially in harmony with this holy year, in which we celebrate the jubilee of the redemption. Christ died and rose again to draw us away from the state of being sinners and to communicate a new life to us. He thereby gave God back to man and man back to God. Lourdes is a place where one undoubtedly understands that redemption better than elsewhere and where millions of pilgrims will live this jubilee.

Quite soon in Rome a Synod of Bishops will be held. I summoned it on the theme of reconciliation and penance, and it is now being prepared for in the dioceses. In my eyes it is a capital event. And I come to Lourdes to pray that this synod may develop in the best way and bear many fruits throughout the Church. I entrust this intention to the Immaculate Conception. I entrust it also to your prayer.

It seems to me that there is a particular grace at Lourdes. The message is sober and clear but fundamental. It was conveyed in an especially strong, pure, transparent manner through an adolescent with a clear and courageous soul. The signs are simple: the wind which evokes the spirit of Pentecost, the water of purification and of life, the light, the Sign of the Cross, the prayer of the rosary. Christians are invited from the beginning to come there in crowds, as Church. And in fact it is as though here human respect and all reserves — which too often block conversion and religious expression — were naturally overcome. Here one prays, one likes to pray, one likes to be reconciled with God, one likes to venerate the Eucharist, one gives a place of honor to the poor, to the sick. It is an exceptional place of grace. God be praised.

Let us praise him with the words of Mary:

"Magnificat anima mea Dominum."

"My being proclaims the greatness of the Lord." "He remembered his love." Let us hear the Lord say to us, "I love you, I have never stopped loving you."

Let us listen to him putting the always fundamental question to Peter: "Do you love? Do you love me?" Without him, without his presence, we should be incapable of replying. But the Holy Spirit can make love and faith live in us. Let us listen to the Spirit who came into Mary in fulness: "God who is mighty has done wonderful things for me." "Magnificat anima mea Dominum."

Nestle 'Violated Code' But Is 'Making Progress'

Washington (NC) — Nestle S. A. violated the World Health Organization's code for marketing infant formula but is making "substantial progress" in implementing the code, a report by the company-initiated Nestle Infant Formula Audit Commission said.

The commission's quarterly report, issued Aug. 18, contained decisions on 21 complaints that Nestle violated the WHO code.

"The complaint reports represent concrete evidence of Nestle's endeavors to

comply with the WHO code and of the difficulties Nestle has encountered and the mistakes Nestle has made made in this process," the report said.

In 11 of the complaints, the commission found Nestle had violated wholly or in part the WHO code or Nestle's corporate instructions on marketing infant formula.

The commission decided seven other complaints were "unfounded" and three more needed further consideration.

The complaints dealt with a wide variety of Nestle practices, including use of sample products, educational films, labeling, press statements, prescription pads, advertisements and promotion in several Third World countries.

"The bulk of the violations fall into two categories — labeling and literature," said Dr. Thad Jackson, vice president of the Nestle Coordination Center for Nutrition.

In all but two complaints "Nestle has acknowledged the violation and undertaken corrective action in response to the complaint itself, rather than waiting for a formal commission recommendation in a final report," the report said.

In one of those two cases, Nestle disagreed with the commission's negative decision on a Singapore ad for "al 110," Nestle's therapeutic formula for feeding problems, the report said. The other case involved language on a Nestle leaflet in Zimbabwe and will be considered further, it added.

"The commission main-

tains its belief that Nestle is committed to implementing the WHO code and that Nestle has made substantial progress in implementing it during the past year," the report continued.

At the same time, however, the commission expressed concern over:

-- Nestle's "slow" pace in introducing materials complying with its infant formula instructions;

-- The possibility of health care institutions ignoring Nestle's policies and misusing donated Nestle supplies; and

-- Independent Third World institutions making available "non-complying" informational and educational materials created before the WHO code was enacted.

"In general we're happy to see that there was an admission of violations by Nestle and that some changes are being made," said Rick Hoyer, coordinator of the Washington Infant Formula Action Coalition (INFAC).

"On the other hand, we are talking about violations that are a year old," he said. "The commission process took a long time," he said. Hoyer speculated that, because of the time involved in the commission's processes, groups protesting Nestle practices would be uncertain "whether it's worth it to continue to submit violations."

Nestle founded the audit commission in May 1982 to review its performance regarding infant formula. Former Secretary of State Edmund S. Muskie chairs the commission.

Infant formula has been

blamed for severe infant health problems in the Third World, where mothers can unwittingly mix formula with dirty water, dilute it too much or otherwise misuse it while thinking it is better for their children than breast milk.

The commission has received 97 formal complaints about Nestle's marketing practice since May 1982.

The 21 complaints processed by the commission

included all but one of the Nestle Boycott Committee "priority complaints" submitted by the International sub- and INFAC, the report said.

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Fr. Walchars Slated for Oct. Retreat

A weekend retreat for men and women will be led by Father John Walchars, SJ, Oct. 21-23 at the Cenacle Renewal Center.

The theme of the program is "Haste Is Your Enemy — Come to Stillness. An offering of \$45 is asked.

Father Walchars will also give two days of renewal Thursday, 9:15 a.m.-3 p.m., Thursday, Oct. 20 and Tuesday, Oct. 25. The theme of the first is "Endurance Is No Sanctification," and of the second, "Do Good Yourself — Don't Expect Others to Do It for You." Participants are asked to bring bag lunches. Beverages will be provided. The offering asked is \$5.

Further information and reservations for any program is available by contacting the Cenacle Ministry Office, 271-8755.

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