

THE POPE

Pope Asks Youth for Commitment to Future

Vienna, Austria (NC) — Here is an NC News translation of Pope John Paul II's German-language talk to young people at the Vienna soccer stadium Sept. 10.

Dear young friends, brothers and sisters:
This evening I listen to you. You have come here from all over Austria and have brought friends with you from neighboring lands. Many of you are already in jobs. Others are attending schools, including high schools. Common to you is this beautiful land in the heart of Europe. Common to you also is faith in Jesus Christ, or at least seeking and asking after him. That is why our meeting this evening is held on the theme, "Jesus Christ — Our Way."



When I look at you or young people from other lands, I feel a deep affection and a great hope.

The future of your land far into the next century lies in your hands. And the future of the faith in Austria and beyond also reposes with you. I know your readiness, from your questions and the demands of those who hold responsibility in state and Church, to set yourselves to the tasks of the present. These are terribly big and call for a total commitment from you. You are touched by want and hunger in wide regions of the world and by so much injustice. You give warning of the mortal danger in the gigantic stockpiles of arms and threats of atomic war. You have concern for the environment. You know that many people, above all young people, are threatened by unemployment or are already without work. Many people in other lands are also oppressed spiritually and cannot acknowledge their faith freely. All that gives rise here and there to the feeling that life has little future, little sense. In this situation, many take flight from responsibility: in short-lived pleasures, in the fantasy worlds of alcohol and drugs, in unbridled sexual relations, in indifference, in cynicism and in violence. For some the flight into death seems the only way out.

But, as someone once said, midnight is also the beginning of day. The difficulties of our time awaken the boldest dreams, the best powers of mind, heart and hand in many people, especially in the young. Readiness to share and commit one's life without reckoning the cost is aroused.

People have begun to ask themselves and others all over the world: What can I do? What can we do? Where does our path lead? It is young people above all who ask such questions. They would like to make their contribution to the healing of a largely tired and sick society. This gives a new meaning to their own lives and those of their friends. This meaning already has a name for many of them: the name "Jesus Christ." They have found Jesus. He has

become their new hope. Other young people are still seeking Jesus. You, show them the way to him.

You have come together in this stadium along various paths. The differing ways along which you have come lead only to the cross. Some of you, representing the rest, have laid this cross down on the earth in the middle of the stadium and have written it upon the earth. It is a cross of flowers, a blossoming cross. It is the banner of victory, the sign of Jesus who rose again after he was crucified, a sign of Easter faith against everything that might harm you.

Your ways and this cross in our midst direct us toward Jesus Christ, who said of himself, "I am the way" (Jn. 14:6). Already 2,000 years ago he called young people such as you to himself. They left their boats and nets and became his followers. Fishermen and taxgatherers became apostles. Jesus appeals to you too. He calls you. And he shows you the way through what the gospels tell of his dealings with mankind.

We are touched likewise by the great concern and liking with which he approached people: by how he blessed children and kept company at dinner with sinners; how he was concerned for his disciples and led them gradually into his life's plan; how he shared the sorrow of the widow of Naim, how he listened to the blind beggar who cried out along the way, and how he conducted his talk with the woman at the well. Every page of the Gospel speaks of the sensitive goodness of him who "went about doing good."

Jesus showed himself deeply bound to the whole of creation as well as to mankind. He noted how the seed sprouts in the field and how the fig tree gives fruit. He observed winds and clouds, mustard seed and vines. Lilies and sparrows became images of the Kingdom of God which he announced.

It is really no wonder that young people of today are looking at Jesus anew: you are especially concerned that man and nature be taken seriously in their dignity and worth.

Of course, Jesus embodies more than any specific ideals of modern man. He points to a deep meaning in nature and man. The world is God's creation. God, the eternal Father, is unceasingly at work in it. So all that is created reveals God: great events as well as seemingly meaningless things, which man easily passes over without noticing.

The gospels also show that the power which Jesus and his whole life express is his vital link with God the Father.

This message of Jesus, of God's constant presence in the midst of this creation, ought to be a source of confidence for us: God knows us. He knows us better than we know ourselves. He loves us — even when this love is hidden in darkness. He is a God who gives us a future. He is not a God of the dead, but he is the living and life-giving God. We can trust ourselves to him, set down roots in him. If we fall, then we fall no further than into God's hand. Jesus exemplified this during the 33 years of his path among men. That is what he meant when he said, "I am the way."

Jesus' message is also a challenge, however. Affection and trust in him must bear results. Feeling, by itself, achieves nothing: we must be ready to hand over our wills and conduct to him. The Lord leaves no doubt about that: "He who obeys the commandments he has from me is the man who loves me" (Jn. 14:21).

You might perhaps still ask: What does the Lord want? How can we do his will? "You know the commandments," Jesus himself answered the young man in the Gospel who put the same question to him: "You know the commandments." Take them seriously. They point out the way.

Dear young friends, Christ has called you to this way. And, as he was with the disciples at Emmaus, so is he with you on the way, on your path toward mankind, in your working life, in society.

You are going out to people. Many of them still are not at all known to you. One will perhaps become a life partner for you, deciding for you and for the children whose parents you both are to become. How will you find the way together? How will you learn that love which also survives disappointments? How will you learn that true self-development, which can say not only "it" but also "you" and "we"? Jesus said, "Come and learn of me."

You are also going on to an occupation. For many it is not going to be what they had dreamed of but simply a job. You are called, however, to do it as whole persons. Do good work, be good workmates. And if it be given to you, be ready as well to take on special responsibility. Have no fear of letting yourself be known in your environment as a Christian. Such acknowledgement brings you deep joy, even when you are sometimes not understood or are even laughed at.

You are, finally, on the way toward a future society. You wish it to be better than present society. Your wish is justified. But it would be wrong not to thank those who in their times did much for you. It would be wrong, backward and the act of a know-it-all to depreciate everything already existing. As Christians, however, we believe in the possibility of further development toward improvement, which naturally presupposes a thorough renewal of mind and a conversion.

You want a society of truthfulness, righteousness and mercy. You would like to see a society with more sense of responsibility toward man and the environment, with more tolerance and above all with more peace. It is up to you to begin it, by being truthful and just, merciful and peaceloving, for we can expect peace from others only if we live it ourselves.

You are going into a society which you must help to shape. The next generation will ask you yourselves the question which you put to your elders today: What have you made of your life and of the world?

You, dear friends, will also shape the approaching history of the Church. I am convinced that you do not want a Church which reduces Jesus' demands or offers the treasure of faith at cheap prices. You want a Church which speaks plainly and lives a life worthy of its faith. Without surrendering to the spirit of the times, it must impart hope to men of today. It does this:

- While it keeps the conviction alive among men that redemption of structures depends on redemption of hearts;
- While it awaits salvation not only from our own strivings, but above all as a gift of God;
- While it proclaims God as our final fulfillment and frees us from anxiety that we might miss happiness when we cannot quickly grasp hold of it ourselves;
- While it lives a joyous simplicity, for it has its true wealth in God.

Jesus says to each of you today what he once said to St. Francis of Assisi: You must rebuild my house the Church. Many dream of another, of a very new Church. Yet Jesus calls upon you to give your commitment for the sake of the present Church. This Church should be your "rebuilding," this Church should be renewed.

Your service can begin this very day, to help build up the Church of tomorrow: A Church knowing no divisions, whether divisions of denominations or divisions of generations, a Church which many call home, and yet which makes it clear that this world is not our final home.

In this Church you all have a place, a task. You build up this Church as young Christians, as future mothers and fathers, as believers engaged in many callings and walks of life. Among you also there are certainly not a few whom Christ will call to serve as priests, women Religious or men Religious. Do not resist his call. Listen to his low voice among all the loud voices which would tell you something else.

Your task is a big one, young friends. But Jesus also tells you, "Fear not." Do not let yourselves be affected by prophets of doom. Do not subscribe to the motto "All or nothing," but have the courage and patience of small steps. Think about it for yourselves and do not let yourselves be led on by strange words or slogans.

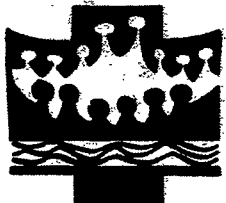
Jesus also tells you, "Turn around, be converted." Do not shove your responsibility off on others, on society, the state, the Church. Turn away from complaints and demands to self-responsibility. Let yourselves find reconciliation with God and man in the sacrament of reconciliation. Then you will be happy people and will be able to make others happy as well.

Jesus asks you, as he asked Peter, "Do you love me?" If you love him, what then will this love cost? You are full of gifts, ideas, good will. You commit yourselves to peace and against want in the Third World. You are young. Even today, it is beautiful to be young: open to the world and to life. It is beautiful to give and to receive.

Jesus says to you: "I send you out." Do not remain sitting in comfort, do not remain seated with your doubts and anxieties, but get up and go. You know the way. Our way is Jesus Christ. Let us go this way together.

Insights In Liturgy

By Pam Schaeffer



Beginnings Not Endings

Autumn arrives in a vision of dazzling color and radiant glory. She dresses herself against a crisp, blue sky, as she merrily dances to a mellow, harvest tune.

In days such as these no one is immune to her distracting presence. But, as the days slip away and we find ourselves deep into the weeks of fall, we may seek immunity but will find no escape from the purple-black clouds and the bleak cruelty of sudden bursts of bitter wind carrying the stench of decaying vegetation. The once glorious colors are snatched from stiffening limbs and hurry along the cold ground to be deposited in sad, brown clumps along fences and buildings, or to be caught by low growing plants anxiously grabbing them to use as a blanket in the frozen time ahead.

For centuries, nature's theater has served as a backdrop to a full gamut of human emotion: our mood swings from giddy participation and noisy harvesting to silent observation and a solemn desire to deny the

reality before our eyes. It appears that all is ending. In the drama before us, it is easy to recognize ourselves and our own brief presence and time of "glory" upon the earth. The shortening of each day's allotment of sunlight and the frozen time fast upon us surfaces fearful feelings with which we prefer not to deal: our own leave-taking from life as we know it.

For us there four seasons: Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter. We often apply nature's seasons to our own lives, new life and childhood being the springtime and old age the wintertime of our lives. But the ancient Celts of Scotland and Ireland knew better; for them there were only two seasons — the Season of Life and the Season of Death. Both seasons began with festivities that still linger into our time. The Season of Life is celebrated on May Day and the Season of Death is remembered on Halloween.

Christians find it easy to incorporate the ancient recognition of the Season of Life as May Day falls between Easter and Pentecost. It can be celebrated with ease because life and light and joy are pro-

claimed during the Easter season. But what of the Season of Death? First, we are not comfortable with death in any form because it reminds us of our own fragile existence. Second, Halloween, falling at the end of October, does not fall into a clearcut liturgical season. Third, Halloween suffers from a twofold malady — like Christmas it is commercialized and unlike Christmas, it is seen as a totally pagan feast.

We honor the feasts of Christmas and Easter even though they are commercialized, because we value their religious nature. They give us hope and light and joy. We can likewise rediscover the true religious dimension of Halloween, the "Season of Death," by removing the masks and glitter behind which we hide and facing the reality of the offending darkness with the assurance that out of the darkness comes new life. This night of darkness and "dark needs" is a preparation for the "harvest" results that we celebrate in the morning light — All Saints. Hope comes with the realization of their victory over darkness and death. Darkness does not bring death and decay and endings, but rather gives us as time of preparation for beginnings, new life. The ancient Celts, like the ancient Jews, calculated the beginning of the new day from the beginning of darkness the evening before. Their reason was

based on the profound insight that beginnings are always hidden, that darkness always prepares for light, that death is simply the prelude to life (not vice versa). As Christians we proclaim this mystery each time we celebrate Eucharist.

Christ's death and resurrection. His victory over darkness and death gave birth to a new and eternal life. A life in which we all have a share as members of Christ's Body. Those who have gone before us, the saints, that we know and revere and those known only to God, represent hope and share with us the light of their example. We, too, belong to this great procession, the communion of saints now and always. In our Eucharistic celebrations, we are able to recognize that we are already blessed with the gospel, grace, church and promise of the kingdom.

Let us begin to see Winter (the Season of Death) as a time that gives rise to new life and new beginnings as it wanders into our lives not as the last season but as the first of all seasons. Let us also recognize the various ways Winter reveals itself to us during our lives and make ready to welcome without fear the "new life and patterns, color, shapes and concealed blessings yet to be discovered" for which we are being prepared (quote: "Winter Dreams and Other Such Friendly Dragons," J. Juknialis).

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Fr. Paul Cuddy

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