

John Paul II's mission to galvanize the U.S.A.

On Sept. 19, 1987, Pope John Paul II completed a 10-day pilgrimage of the United States whose effects, we believe, will be reverberating for many years to come. Most of the electronic and printed media, together with a vocal minority of American Heresy clergymen, engaged in a systematic effort to distort both the Pope's mission in the U.S.A., and its effect. We believe that these petty detractors will fail and be forgotten and that the Pope's heroic effort to galvanize and morally rally the American people during a period of deep crisis, will, eventually, bear fruit. In lieu of any other kind of coverage, we reprint, below, some excerpts from among his many, memorable messages to the nation and the people of the United States.—The Editor in Chief.

To America: Fulfill your destiny of service to the world!

Mr. President, dear Friends,
Dear People of America,

It is a great joy for me once again to be in your country, and I thank you for your warm welcome. I am deeply grateful to you all.

I express my special thanks to the President of the United States, who honors me by his presence here today. I thank the Bishops' Conference and all the individual Bishops who have invited me to their dioceses, and who have done so much to prepare for my visit.

My cordial greetings and good wishes go to all the people of this land. I thank you for opening your hearts to me and for supporting me by your prayers. I assure you of my own prayers.

To everyone I repeat on this occasion what I said on that memorable day in 1979 when I arrived in Boston: "On my part I come to you—America—with sentiments of friendship, reverence and esteem. I come as one who already knows you and loves you, as one who wishes you to fulfill completely your noble destiny of service to the world" (Oct. 1, 1979).

Today, like then, I come to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all those who freely choose to listen to me; to tell again the story of God's love in the world; to spell out once more the message of human dignity, with its inalienable human rights and its inevitable human duties.

Like so many before me coming to America and to this very city of Miami, I come as a pilgrim: a pilgrim in the cause of justice and peace and human solidarity—striving to build up the one human family.

I come here as a pastor—the pastor of the Catholic Church, to speak and pray with the Catholic people. The theme of my visit, "Unity in the Work of Service," affords me the welcome opportunity to enter into ever deeper communion with them in our common service to the Lord. It also enables me to experience ever more keenly with them their hopes and joys, their anxieties and griefs.

I come as a friend—a friend of America and of all Americans: Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, and Jews, people of every religion, and all men and women of good will. I come as a friend of the poor and the sick and the dying; those who are struggling with the problems of each day; those who are rising and falling and stumbling on the journey of life; those who are seeking and discovering, and those not yet finding, the deep meaning of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happi-

ness.”

And finally I come to join you as you celebrate the Bicentennial of that great document, the Constitution of the United States of America. I willingly join you in your prayer of thanksgiving to God for the providential way in which the Constitution has served the people of this nation for two centuries: for the union it has formed, the justice it has established, the tranquility and peace it has ensured, the general welfare it has promoted, and the blessings of liberty it has secured.

I join you also in asking God to inspire you—as Americans who have received so much in freedom and prosperity and human enrichment—to continue to share all this with so many brothers and sisters throughout the other countries of the world who are still waiting and hoping to live according to standards worthy of the children of God.

With great enthusiasm I look forward to being with you in the days ahead. Meanwhile, my prayer for all of you, dear people of America, is this:

“The Lord bless you and keep you! The Lord let his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace”(Nm 6:24-26).

God bless America!

To the Bishops: 'Apart from me, you can do nothing'

. . . As I also wrote to you last year, I have endeavored to fulfill my role as Successor of Peter in a spirit of fraternal solidarity with you. I wish only to be of service to all the Bishops of the world, and—in obedience to my specific responsibility at the service of the Church's unity and universality—to confirm them in their own collegial ministry. I have always been greatly encouraged in this task by your fraternal support and your partnership in the Gospel, for which I express to you again my profound gratitude. It is of great importance to the Church that in the full power of the Church's communion we continue to proclaim together Jesus Christ and his Gospel. In this way we ourselves live fully, as Successors of the Apostles, the mystery of ecclesial communion. At the same time through our ministry we enable the faithful to enter ever more deeply into the Church's life of communion with the Most Holy Trinity.

5. Archbishop Quinn has spoken of the Church as a community that wishes to remain faithful to the moral teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. To proclaim a body of moral teaching is in fact an inseparable part of the Church's mission in the world. From the beginning, the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has striven to apply God's revelation in Christ to all the many aspects of our living in this world, knowing that we are called to “lead a life worthy of the Lord and pleasing to him in every way” (Col 1:10). It is sometimes reported that a large number of Catholics today do not adhere to the teaching of the Church on a number of questions,

notably sexual and conjugal morality, divorce and remarriage. Some are reported as not accepting the Church's clear position on abortion. It has also been noted that there is a tendency on the part of some Catholics to be selective in their adherence to the Church's moral teachings. It is sometimes claimed that dissent from the Magisterium is totally compatible with being a “good Catholic” and poses no obstacle to the reception of the Sacraments. This is a grave error that challenges the teaching office of the Bishops of the United States and elsewhere. I wish to encourage you in the love of Christ to address this situation courageously in your pastoral ministry, relying on the power of God's truth to attract assent and on the grace of the Holy Spirit which is given both to those who proclaim the message and to those to whom it is addressed.

We must also constantly recall that the teaching of Christ's Church—like Christ himself—is a “sign of contradiction.” It has never been easy to accept the Gospel teaching in its entirety, and it never will be. The Church is committed, both in faith and morals, to make her teaching as clear and understandable as possible, presenting it in all the attractiveness of divine truth. And yet the challenge of the Gospel remains inherent in the Christian message transmitted to each generation. Archbishop Quinn has made reference to a principle with extremely important consequences for every area of the Church's life: “. . . the revelation of God par excellence is found in the Cross of Christ, which makes God's folly wiser than human wisdom. Often human wisdom in a given age appears to have the last word. But the Cross brings a perspective that changes judgments radically.” Yes, dear Brothers, the Cross—in the very act of revealing mercy, compassion, and love—changes judgments radically.

6. A number of other general points may be made. First, the Church is a community of faith. To accept faith is to give assent to the word of God as transmitted by the Church's authentic Magisterium. Such assent constitutes the basic attitude of the believer, and is an act of the will as well as of the mind. It would be altogether out of place to try to model this act of religion on attitudes drawn from secular culture.

Within the ecclesial community, theological discussion takes place within the framework of faith. Dissent from Church doctrine remains what it is, dissent; as such it may not be proposed or received on an equal footing with the Church's authentic teaching.

Moreover, as Bishops we must be especially responsive to our role as authentic teachers of the faith when opinions at variance with the Church's teaching are proposed as a basis for pastoral practice. I wish to support you as you continue to engage in fruitful dialogue with theologians regarding the legitimate freedom of inquiry which is their right. You rightly give them sincere encouragement in their difficult task, and assure them how much the Church needs and deeply appreciates their dedicated and constructive work. They, on their

part, will recognize that the title Catholic theologian expresses a vocation and a responsibility at the service of the community of faith, and subject to the authority of the Pastors of the Church. In particular your dialogue will seek to show the inacceptability of dissent and confrontation as a policy and method in the area of Church teaching.

7. Speaking on your behalf, Archbishop Quinn has shown full awareness of the seriousness of the challenge facing your teaching ministry. He has spoken of the dual task of the conversion of the mind and the conversion of the heart. The way to the heart very often passes through the mind, and throughout the length and breadth of the Church there is need today for a new effort of evangelization and catechesis directed to the mind. Elsewhere I have mentioned the relationship between the Gospel and culture. Here I wish to underline the importance of the formation of the mind at every level of Catholic life.

Catholic children and young people need to be given an effective opportunity to learn the truths of the faith, in such a way that they become capable of formulating their Catholic identity in terms of doctrine and thought. Here the Catholic press can make a magnificent contribution to raising the general level of Catholic thought and culture. Seminaries, especially, have the responsibility of ensuring that future priests should acquire a high level of intellectual preparation and competence. Continuing education programs for priests, Religious and laity play an important part in stimulating a necessary and serious intellectual approach to the multitude of questions confronting faith in our contemporary world.

A crucial aspect of this "apostolate of the mind" concerns the duty and right of Bishops to be present in an effective way in Catholic colleges and universities and institutes of higher studies in order to safeguard and promote their Catholic character, especially in what affects the transmission of Catholic doctrine. It is a task which requires personal attention on the part of Bishops, since it is a specific responsibility stemming from their teaching office. It implies frequent contacts with teaching and administrative personnel, and calls for providing serious programs of pastoral care for students and others within the academic community. Much is already being done, and I take the opportunity to encourage you to seek ways of intensifying these apostolates.

One of the greatest services we Bishops can render to the Church is to consolidate present and future generations of Catholics in a sound and complete understanding of their faith. The ecclesial community will thus be wonderfully strengthened for all aspects of Christian moral living and for generous service. The intellectual approach that is needed, however, is one intimately linked to faith and prayer. Our people must be aware of their dependence on Christ's grace and on the great need to open themselves ever more to its action. Jesus himself wants us all to be convinced of his words: "Apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5) and

personal commitment to the demands of the Gospel.

11. In speaking of the laity, I feel a particular desire to support you in all you are doing on behalf of family life. Archbishop Weakland has mentioned "the large number of divorces and the breakup of so many families" as a special pastoral problem. I know that all of us feel great sadness and deep pastoral concern for all those whose lives are affected in this way.

As you will recall, on the occasion of your *ad Limina* visits, four years ago, I spoke at some length on the topic of marriage. Without repeating all that I said on that occasion, I wish to encourage you to continue in your many zealous and generous efforts to provide pastoral care to families. I also urge you, in the face of all the trends which threaten the stability of marriage, the dignity of human love, and the dignity of human life, as well as its transmission, never to lose confidence and courage. Through the grace given us as pastors we must endeavor to present as effectively as possible the whole teaching of the Church, including the prophetic message contained in *Humanae Vitae* and in *Familiaris Consortio*.

The faithful teaching of the intrinsic relationship between the unitive and procreative dimensions of the marriage act is of course only a part of our pastoral responsibility. With pastoral solicitude for couples, *Familiaris Consortio* pointed out that "the ecclesial community at the present time must take on the task of instilling conviction and offering Practical help to those who wish to live out their parenthood in a truly responsible way. . . . This implies a broader, more decisive and more systematic effort to make the natural methods of regulating fertility known, respected and applied" (No. 35).

On the occasion of the last *ad Limina* visits I stated: "Those couples who choose the natural methods perceive the profound difference—both anthropological and moral—between contraception and natural family planning. Yet they may experience difficulties; indeed they often go through a certain conversion in becoming committed to the use of the natural methods, and they stand in need of competent instruction, encouragement and pastoral counselling and support."

We must be sensitive to their struggles and have a feeling for the needs that they experience. We must encourage them to continue their efforts with generosity, confidence and hope. As Bishops we have the charisma and the pastoral responsibility to make our people aware of the unique influence that the grace of the sacrament of marriage has on every aspect of married life, including sexuality (cf. *Familiaris Consortio*, 33). The teaching of Christ's Church is not only light and strength for God's People, but it uplifts their hearts in gladness and hope.

Executive Intelligence Review's coverage of the Pope's messages to Americans, including those to the laity, to youth, and to representatives of other faiths, will continue next week.