



## **PETER THE FOUNDATION OF THE FAITH**

**At the usual Wednesday audience on April 3rd, the Holy Father received groups from many countries including a great number of students from Italy, France, Germany and Spain. Beloved sons and daughters:**

Our thought is directed to you, dear students, who today hold first place in this great audience. Our words will be simple and brief, but important as to any other audience.

We ask you a question: Have you understood the significance of the symbolic name of Peter given by Jesus to his chief disciple, Simon, son of Jonah: "I say unto you that you are Peter and upon this rock I shall build my Church" (Matt. 16, 18), in other words, the society of those who believe in me and are gathered together in my name, and founded on you? The concept Jesus wanted to express is clear, even if it is complex and profound when we consider it closely. It is the concept of the solidity, stability, permanence, let us even say, of immovableness. Simon, son of Jonah, was a good but enthusiastic and changeable man who was both generous and timid. By giving him the title, rather, the gift and the charism of strength, toughness, a rock-like power to resist and sustain, he linked his message to the new and wonderful virtue of this apostle who together with his lawful successors was to bear witness with incomparable security to that same message which we call the gospel.

### **Instability of modern culture**

Think it over carefully. Here we are over the tomb of Simon re-named Peter. We recall and rest the truth of the words of Jesus: here that rock (a figure derived from that other stone, the cornerstone,

centre and basic strength of all christianity which is Christ himself), that rock is still firm, solid and secure. It is an historical, psychological, theological and wonderful miracle.

We might almost describe it as the practical proof of another prophecy of Jesus: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Matt. 24,35). This singular fact is of particular importance to you, dear children, who, as students, are searchers for truth. What is study if not a search for so many beautiful and wonderful truths? What does the modern and scientific mind tell you in this regard? It tells you that truth is not unchangeable, that it is not definite and secure. Today schooling is defined as a search for truth, rather than the possession or acquisition of truth. In fact, everything changes and progresses. Human thought is characterized by historical achievement, by the so-called historicism which is erected into system to such an extent as to make time the cradle and the grave of truth. Chronological fact dominates culture with the result that nothing is any longer certain, stable or worthy of being accepted and believed as a value to which the guidance and meaning of life can be entrusted.

### **Religious teaching must be clear**

This attitude is invading the religious field also. Many wish to submit religious truth to a radical revision, to eliminate those dogmas or teachings that seem antiquated and outmoded by scientific progress, and which are incomprehensible to the modern mind. In the attempt to give the Catholic religion an expression more in conformity with contemporary idiom and mentality, and to bring it "up-to-date", it often happens, unfortunately, that the reality is undermined, and people try to make it "understandable", by first changing formulas in which the Teaching-Church has expressed and, as it were, sealed it, to enable it to traverse the centuries while jealously preserving its identity. Then they alter the very content of traditional doctrine, subjecting it to the dominant law of historical change. The word of Christ is no longer the Truth that never changes, ever living, radiant, and fruitful, even though at times beyond our rational understanding. It becomes a partial truth, like those others which the mind measures within its own limits, one that may be expressed otherwise in succeeding ages as a result of free enquiry, and is thus deprived of all objective validity and transcendent authority.

### **Christ speaks through the Pope**

It will be said that the council authorized such treatment of traditional teaching. Nothing is more false, if we are to accept the word of Pope John, who launched that "aggiornamento" in whose name some dare to impose on Catholic dogma dangerous and sometimes reckless interpretations. In his famous

speech of the opening of the Second Vatican Council Pope John proclaimed that the Council itself must re-affirm the entire Catholic doctrine "nulla parte inde detracta"—without abandoning any part of it, though the Council would have to give a new, adequate and more profound expression to that truth in a way that was most in keeping with modern studies. So that faithfulness to the Council demands a fresh and wise study of the truth of the faith, and leads us back to the perennial, univocal, and consoling testimony of St. Peter. Jesus wanted his infallible voice in the Church, to guarantee the stability of the faith, almost as a challenge to the arbitrary changes wrought by time.

Therefore, dear sons and daughters, who have come to the tomb of the unbreakable rock to bear witness to your filial and trusting adherence to the Catholic faith, you must feel the power that emanates from its stability, and that sustains, even in our century, the fruitful and joyous vitality of the Word of Christ. And so that none of you may lack this stupendous, spiritual experience we give you Our Apostolic Blessing".

## POPE'S CLARION CALL TO YOUTH

**On Palm Sunday, April 7th, after distributing palms to the congregation at the Solemn Pontifical Mass which was attended by many Cardinals, dignitaries of the Papal Household, and a large number of people among whom the younger generation was conspicuous, the Holy Father addressed the faithful as follows:**

It is primarily to the young people present here to-day that We address Our words. We wish first to greet you and to thank you for coming here to this service. Your presence is particularly significant, because it appears that it was the younger generation, the "pueri Hebraeorum" (as the text of the Liturgy indicate), who were foremost in working up and expressing their enthusiasm for the entry of Jesus as Messiah into Jerusalem. You know the event recorded in the Gospel which we are commemorating: it was the public recognition, the popular acclamation of Christ as Messiah, as man in whose person the centuries-old expectation of the Jewish people was at last realized, in whom the old prophecies were fulfilled, and who thus started the new era of salvation both for the Chosen People of God and indeed for the whole of mankind, in a word, who brought the Kingdom of God into this world. There are two points to be noted here: (i) the vast crowd of people gathered for the Jewish Pasch or "Passover", for which pilgrims flocked from all over Palestine

(and even further afield) to Jerusalem as the centre and symbol of the whole destiny of the children of Israel; (ii) the hostility of the Jewish leaders, which was by now unbounded and resolved to go to any lengths, even to putting this young, insufferable prophet from Galilee to death.

### **Jesus acclaimed by the people**

Jesus always disliked any gesture of honour; but for this once he did nothing to stop the people's excitement. Indeed he himself made all the arrangements for meeting the crowds and responding to their acclamation, albeit in the unassuming way (which you will remember) of riding in on a small donkey. This was ostensibly very modest, but it threw into high relief the mysterious symbolic nature of the Master who was hailed by the crowd of onlookers (and more especially by the young men and boys) with the most high sounding titles which it was possible to give any man in the light of Jewish history and of the Jewish mentality at that time, titles such as "son of David" "messenger of the good fortune of God's chosen people", "the one sent by God to fulfill the destiny of that proud but unhappy people under God's own rule, although never letting go of life or hope".

The crowd waved branches of palm and olive to mark this historic moment with an appearance of gaiety. It was indeed a moment of triumph, but one intended to strike the spark which would set the messianic fire ablaze; it was (if you wish) a piece of outward show, hastily improvised and somewhat superficial, but one which revealed a glimpse of something which nothing could stop and which gave at least a hint of some radical upheaval in the near future.

Jesus himself let this be understood; he wished the outburst of popular enthusiasm to go unchecked. More than that, he showed that this was a moment full of significance in the history of redemption, when he drew near to the massive walls of the holy city and began to lament and to foretell its downfall in the fairly near future. But before the city fell, destruction would have overtaken himself within only a few days, the cross which he well knew was in store for him.

### **Christ's challenge to youth**

But now let us concentrate on the event itself: Jesus recognized by his people as the Messiah, the Christ, and acclaimed as such, especially by the young people shouting "Hosannah". This event is reproduced in today's liturgy. You young people in this moment become (along with the whole congregation of the faithful) the heralds or "outriders" of Christ. You perpetuate the moment when Our Lord manifested the glory of his messianic kingship in our own time and place; you renew the act of faith in his mission, indeed in person. You recognize him as Master of all mankind; you proclaim him as prophet of the world's destiny. You hail him as the King of kings and

Lord of Lords who stands at the centre of every man's personal fate and of the overall design of history. Jesus is the truth of human existence; he is also its life, the source of our salvation both now and hereafter.

Are you listening, dear children? Do you understand what we are saying? Does it mean anything to you, or is it too remote from your experience? . . . too strange and foreign to make any sense? We feel some anxiety, some fear, that you will regard Our voice merely as Our own, that is to say, the voice of a poor old man who is treading out life's way with you, a voice repeating words that are out-of-date and now outworn; in short, that you will fail to recognize in it a voice of prophetic inspiration in which there faithfully re-echoed the timeless and ever-living voice of Christ himself.

We are inviting you to acclaim Jesus, the Christ, the Lord of mankind, the Saviour of the world. Are you afraid as you listen to this invitation lest you may lose what to-day you prize most highly—your freedom? Are you afraid lest, if you put yourselves at Christ's disposal or the service of his message, you may suddenly find an incomprehensible, an unbearable, cross laid on your shoulders? Are you afraid that, if you let Jesus put his charm on you in the depths of your conscience, this may snuff out the flame of natural love and leave you all alone and bewildered, looking for some conversation, friendship, or fellowship which you have lost?

### **The Truth will make you free**

Take heed, dear children. You should understand what We ask of you - - to acclaim Christ--recognize in him the Christ who is not merely a verbal proclamation of his glory but is at the same time your own happiness and good fortune. Why do you sing hymns to Jesus Christ? Because he is our Saviour, who liberated us and coaches us to win and enjoy the fulness of our human nature in all its greatness and heroism; he is the master who teaches us the truest, the purest, the noblest type of human sympathy, namely, charity. If you let yourselves really exalt Christ, you may experience a sort of somersault, a turning upside-down: Can't you see, youngsters of to-day, how infected you are by a deadweight of conformity, which may well become a fixed habit and which unconsciously subjects your freedom to the machine-like tyranny of other people's thinking, opinions, feelings, acts, and fashions? or how, although this "crowd-spirit" may make you feel strong, once it has you in its grip, it drives you at times to group-revolt, often without your knowing why. The psychology of much of to-day's youth is curious, and needs a more profound, more discerning and lengthy analysis than We can give it here: but We believe that this description of it, however summary, is substantially correct. But if you really get to know him and stick to him (as you well know how) with all your energy and strength, what will happen to you? You will become free

within yourselves. Jesus himself said "The truth will make you free" (John VIII, 32). You will become real persons. You will know the "why" of life, and for whom you are living. You will have the ultimate reasons of human existence in yourselves. You will be rescued from the pressures of mass suggestion, which so easily distracts the mind, dulls the conscience, and binds the yoke of machine-like collectivism on individuals. At the same time, you will feel a marvelous thing happening, an intelligent power of friendship, sociability, and love coming to birth in you. You will not feel lonely. Adherence to Christ will teach you adherence to fellow men; it will make you aware of their virtues and of their needs, for which we have to love them and serve them... and all this without for one moment infringing your own personalities which remain inviolable. A higher type of social living will emerge in you, the society of charity: and this, not merely as an idea or as an amateurish attempt to get alongside other people by dialogue, but as an interior impulse of goodness, of dedication to others, of union with them, of true love which cannot be gainsaid.

### **The Peace of Christ**

My dear children: You have come to this religious ceremony here to-day. Just think a little where it is happening: in church—in The Church. If we are really and truly to meet Jesus, if we are to be worthy to be acclaimed as the fulfiller of all mankind's hopes, then it is here that we must come... here where he appears to us morally, and sacramentally, both in the lowly forms recorded in the gospel but also in the unambiguous and commanding presence of his divine kingship.

It is here that all of you, young and old alike (although particularly the young), as you acclaim Christ the Saviour and wave your branches of palm and olive, proclaim peace—his peace-- for all men of to-day: the peace which the world is seeking but cannot find, which it can never obtain for itself but which only Jesus can give it (John, XIV 27). "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matt. V 9).

### **Martin Luther King**

And here we cannot pass over in silence the sad event which to-day weighs on the conscience of the whole world: the cowardly and brutal murder of Martin Luther King. We shall associate with this the tragic story of Christ's Passion which we have just heard.

A few years ago we received in audience this Christian preacher who did so much to promote the human and civil standing of his Negro people on American soil. We knew something of the fervour of his propaganda: and

We even ventured to urge on him that his mission should avoid violence, and be directed instead to fostering firm brotherhood and co-operation between the two races, the black and the white. He then assured Us that his style of propaganda expressly eschewed any sort of violence, and that his purpose was to foster peaceful and friendly relations between the two races. This makes Our sorrow over his tragic death all the greater, and makes Us deplore this crime all the more forcefully. We are sure that you here (and indeed the whole Catholic community in Rome and throughout the world) share these feelings; just as we shall all share the hopes which his martyrdom inspires in Us. May this detestable crime become a true sacrifice! May it induce, not hatred or revenge or an even wider gulf between citizens of the same great and noble country, but rather a new purpose of mutual pardon, of peace and reconciliation! May the strife of to-day and the unjust discriminations of race give place to the equal enjoyment of justice and freedom as of right.

Our grief is enhanced and Our fears aroused by the reactions of violence and disorder which this sad event has already provoked; but We also cherish a hope, which increases as We see that there is a growing desire and determination in responsible quarters (and indeed in the heart of all rightminded people) to make the death of Martin Luther King an occasion for over-coming racial conflict and for establishing regulations and ways of living together which are more in line with modern civilization and Christian brotherhood. With lamentation, yet with real hope, we pray that this may be so.

## RENEWAL BUT NOT BETRAYAL

**This week's General Audience was held on Thursday, April 25th as it was a national holiday in Italy. St. Peter's Basilica was crowded with pilgrims from many parts of Italy and also from other countries. The Pope took as the theme of his discourse "Joy and Hope".**

Beloved children:

Your visit fills Us with joy and hope. We can make our own the words of the title of the famous Council Constitution: *gaudium et spes*. Joy because you are so numerous. Today St. Peter's is not large enough to hold Our visitors, to the extent that we are obliged to subdivide them into three separate audiences. This concourse of people is reason for joy. We see in it

almost a biblical reflexion: "All these are gathered together, they are come to thee: thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall rise up at thy side. Then shalt thou see and abound, and thy heart shall wonder and be enlarged..." (Is 60, 4.4-5).

There is something that transcends a tourist attraction in this gathering here today. You did not find it easy or comfortable, and it offers you nothing except the pleasant awareness of being here, that is, not merely at the geographical centre of the Church, but the historical, visible, spiritual and mystical centre of its marvellous and moving unity. Here we have the tomb of the Apostle whom Christ chose as the foundation of His mysterious edifice, the Church. Here it is so pleasant to meet people from every country knowing they are all brethren, all believers united in the same faith and charity, i.e., all Catholics. You did not come here by chance, nor is your presence here something organized. You come here freely and spontaneously, not indeed to take part in or witness a show, but to pray and to hear what We had to say and to receive our blessing. It is in circumstances such as these that we feel the insufficiency of Our human person and the greatness of Our title as Vicar of Christ. Therefore you are a source of great joy for Us. Never tiring of admiring the vision of Our pilgrims and Our visitors, we give thanks to the Lord with the words of David: "I have seen with great joy thy people which are here present, offer thee their offering" (1 Par. 29. 17):: the gifts of their faith and piety.

With joy there is hope -- the hope that this presence will be worth much for the cause of the Kingdom of God, that is, that of Christ, of His Church and of yourselves. We shall tell you something which will make you reflect: We need you: You certainly have come here to make an act of faith, to give the Church proof of your filial devotion, to bear witness to your purpose of Christian life. We have great need of these spiritual gifts. We need your awakened Catholic conscience, your loyalty to the Holy Church of God. This seems obvious and already proved by the religious devotion and by the sincerity of sentiments that brings you here. This is Our hope for you.

In many countries the Church, as you know, is going through troubled historical and spiritual times. It is a source of apprehension and fear to the pastors of the Church and to Us. The whole modern world is getting away from the sense of God, all taken up as it is by the wealth of its conquests in the scientific and technical field; not that this postulates the "death of God" as some have expressed it so unhappily, not does it demand an atheistic attitude of mind far removed from all religion. This characteristic progress of the modern world would rather demand a more elevated, more penetrating and more adoring sense of the Divine, a religion more pure and more alive reaching



to the heights of human wisdom: not only, shall we say, for this widespread religious apostasy, but also and in relation to the sensitivity of those who have responsible positions in the Church, especially for the restlessness which troubles certain sectors of the Catholic world itself.

It is not something unknown. After the Council the Church enjoyed, and is still enjoying, a magnificent re-awakening that We are pleased to recognise and encourage. But the Church has suffered and is still suffering from ideas and facts that are certainly not in accordance with the Holy Spirit, and give no promise of that vital renewal promoted and promised by the Council. An idea with a twofold meaning has made strides even in Catholic Circles. This is the idea of change, which for many has taken the place of the idea of "aggiornamento", presaged by Pope John of venerable memory.

In the face of the evidence and contrary to all justice they attribute to that most faithful Shepherd of the Church ideas, which are not ideas of reform, but which are even destructive of the teaching and discipline of the Church.

There are many things that can be corrected and modified in Catholic life, many doctrines that can be studied more deeply, completed and expressed in more comprehensible terms, many rules that can be simplified and better adapted to the needs of our times. But there were two matters beyond argument: the truth of the Faith, authoritatively sanctioned by tradition and by the ecclesiastical magisterium, and the constitutional law of the Church. Obedience must be given to the ministry of the pastoral government, that Christ established and that the wisdom of the Church has developed and extended in the various members of the mystical and visible body of the Church, to guide and strengthen the many component parts that make up the People of God. Therefore: renewal, yes. Arbitrary change, no. History of the Church, ever living and new, yes. Historicism destructive of traditional dogma, no. Theological integration according to the teaching of the Council, yes. Theology deriving from arbitrary subjective theories, often borrowed from hostile sources, no. A church open to ecumenical charity, to responsible dialogue, to the recognition of Christian values among our separated brethren, yes. An irenic theology that betrays the truth of the Faith, and adopts certain negative principles which have contributed to the separation of so many Christians, from the centre of unity of the Catholic communion, no. Religious liberty for all in civilised society, and liberty of personal adherence to religion according to the well-considered choice of the individual conscience, yes. Liberty of conscience as the criterion of religious truth, without references to the authenticity of serious and authorized teaching, no. And so on.

### Discernment and loyalty

Therefore, dearest children, the Church today needs your discernment and your loyalty. And this is the hope that your visit brings to Us, to Our great consolation. The Church needs the clear-mindedness of her children, their loving and steady faithfulness. Have you come to Us with clear ideas of the renewal of life within the Church, dear children? Have you brought Us the great, the precious, the dearest gift of your fidelity? This is Our fatherly hope.

And so, with Our heart full of joy and hope, We bless you with all Our heart.

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### FALSE RENEWAL OF THEOLOGY

*"Damage beyond belief could be provoked by arbitrary interpretations — disrupting its traditional and constitutional structure, replacing the theology of the true and great Fathers of the Church, with new and peculiar ideologies, interpretations, intent upon stripping the norms of faith of that which modern though often lacking rational judgment, does not understand and does not like . . ."*

Paul VI, Homily in Fatima (May 13, 1967)