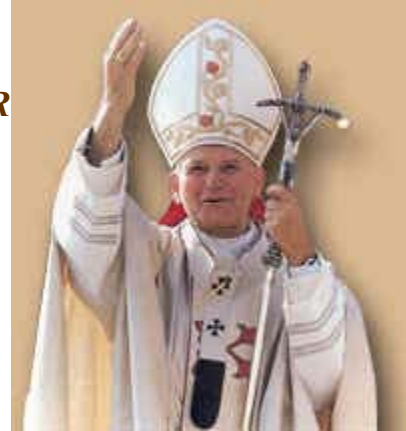


**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE JOHN
PAUL II
FOR THE 42nd WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR
VOCATIONS**

17 APRIL 2005 - FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

"Called to put out into the deep"

*Venerable Brethren in the Episcopate,
dearest Brothers and Sisters!*



1. "*Duc in altum!*" At the beginning of the Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, I made reference to the words with which Jesus encourages the first disciples to let down their nets for a catch, which turned out to be a marvellous one. Jesus says to Peter: "*Duc in altum* - Put out into the deep" (*Lk* 5,4). "Peter and the first companions trusted Christ's words and cast their nets" (*Novo millennio ineunte*, 1).

This well-known Gospel scene can serve as the background setting of the coming World Day of Prayer for Vocations, which has the theme: "*Called to put out into the deep*". This is a special occasion for reflecting on the vocation to follow Christ and, in particular, to follow him in the priesthood and the consecrated life.

2. "*Duc in altum!*" The command of Christ is particularly relevant in our time, when there is a widespread mentality which, in the face of difficulties, favours personal non-commitment. The first condition for "putting out into the deep" is to cultivate a deep spirit of prayer nourished by a daily listening to the Word of God. The authenticity of the Christian life is measured by the depth of one's prayer, an art that must be humbly learnt "from the lips of the Divine Master", almost imploring "like the first disciples: 'Lord, teach us to pray!' (*Lk* 11,1). In prayer, a conversation with Christ develops and it makes us his intimate friends: 'Abide in me and I in you' (*Jn* 15, 4)" (*Novo millennio ineunte*, 32).

The link with Christ through prayer also makes us aware that He is also present in moments of apparent failure, when tireless effort seems useless, as happened to the Apostles themselves, who after toiling all night, exclaimed: "Master, we took nothing" (*Lk* 5,5). It is especially in these moments that one needs to open one's heart to the abundance of grace and to allow the word of the Redeemer to act with all its power: "*Duc in altum!*" (cfr *Novo millennio ineunte*, 38).

3. Whoever opens his heart to Christ will not only understand the mystery of his own existence, but also that of his own vocation; he will bear the abundant fruit of grace. The first fruit will be his growth in holiness, in the course of a spiritual journey which begins with the gift of Baptism and continues even to the fullness of perfect love (cfr *ibid.*, 30). Living the Gospel without adding to it, the Christian becomes always increasingly capable of loving in the way that Christ loved, and welcomes the exhortation of Christ:

"You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (*Mt 5,48*). He will commit himself to persevering in unity with his brothers within the communion of the Church, and he will place himself at the service of the new evangelization, to proclaim and bear witness to the wonderful truth of the saving love of God.

4. Dear adolescents and young people, it is to you in a particular way that I renew the invitation of Christ to "put out into the deep". You find yourselves having to make important decisions for your future. I still hold in my heart the memory of the many opportunities I have had over the years to meet with young people, who have now become adults, some of them your own parents perhaps, or priests or religious, your teachers in the faith. I saw them, happy as young people should be, but also thoughtful, because they were conscious of a desire to give full 'meaning' to their lives. I came to recognise more and more how strong is the attraction in young people to the values of the spirit, and how sincere is their desire for holiness. Young people need Christ, but they also know that Christ chose to be in need of them.

Dear young men and women! Trust Christ; listen attentively to his teachings, fix your eyes on his face, persevere in listening to his Word. Allow Him to focus your search and your aspirations, all your ideals and the desires of your heart.

5. Now I turn to you, dear parents and Christian educators, to you dear priests, consecrated persons and catechists. God has entrusted to you the peculiar task of guiding young people on the path to holiness. Be an example to them of generous fidelity to Christ. Encourage them to "put out into the deep" without hesitation, responding eagerly to the invitation of the Lord. Some he calls to family life, others to consecrated life or to the ministerial priesthood. Help them to discern their path, and to become true friends of Christ and his true disciples. When adult Christians show themselves capable of revealing the face of Christ through their own words and example, young people are more ready to welcome His demanding message, stamped as it is with the mystery of the Cross.

Do not forget that today too there is need of holy priests, of persons wholly consecrated to the service of God! With this in mind, I want to repeat once more: "There is a pressing need to implement an extensive plan of vocational promotion, based on personal contact and involving parishes, schools, and families in the effort to foster a more attentive reflection on the essential values of life. These values reach their fulfilment in the response which each person is invited to give to God's call, particularly when the call implies the total gift of oneself and of one's energies for the sake of the Kingdom" (*Novo millennio ineunte*, 46)

To you, young people, I repeat the word of Jesus: "Duc in altum!". In proposing His exhortation once more to you, I think at the same time of the words which Mary, his Mother, addressed to the servants at Cana in Galilee: "Do whatever he tells you" (*Jn 2,5*). Dear young people, Christ is asking you to "put out into the deep" and the Virgin Mary is encouraging you not to hesitate in following Him.

6. May an ardent prayer sustained by the motherly intercession of Mary, rise from every corner of the earth, to the heavenly Father to obtain "*labourers for his harvest*" (Mt 9,38). May He give zealous and holy priests to every part of his flock. Sustained by this awareness we turn to Christ, the High Priest, and we pray to Him with renewed trust:

*Jesus, Son of God,
in whom the fullness of the Divinity dwells,
You call all the baptized to "put out into the deep",
taking the path that leads to holiness.
Waken in the hearts of young people the desire
to be witnesses in the world of today
to the power of your love.
Fill them with your Spirit of fortitude and prudence,
so that they may be able to discover the full truth
about themselves and their own vocation.*

*Our Saviour,
sent by the Father to reveal His merciful love,
give to your Church the gift
of young people who are ready to put out into the deep,
to be the sign among their brothers
of Your presence which renews and saves.*

*Holy Virgin, Mother of the Redeemer,
sure guide on the way towards God and towards neighbour,
You who pondered his word in the depth of your heart,
sustain with your motherly intercession
our families and our ecclesial communities,
so that they may help adolescents and young people
to answer generously the call of the Lord.
Amen.*

Castel Gandolfo, 11th August 2004