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Message for 18th World Youth Day: "Behold Your Mother!"

Pope John Paul's Message for the 18th World Youth Day, to be celebrated in dioceses throughout the world on Palm Sunday 2003, was published today. The Pope noted that the theme he chose, "Behold your Mother!" is linked to the Year of the Rosary which he proclaimed on October 16, 2002.

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He also announced the themes of the 19th World Youth Day in 2004, "We wish to see Jesus," and the 20th World Youth Day in Cologne, Germany in 2005: "We have come to worship Him."

The Holy Father said that "Jesus, before He died, gave the Apostle John the most precious gift He had; His Mother, Mary. These were the last words of the Redeemer, and therefore they take on a solemn character and become His spiritual testimony." He stated that Mary, "the Mother of God from the first moment of the Incarnation, became the Mother of men at the last moments of the life of her Son Jesus."

The Pope told young people to remember that they are never alone

and can turn to Mary when they suffer "the solitude, failures and delusions in personal life, difficulties in becoming part of the adult and professional world, separations and deaths in families, the violence of wars and the death of innocent people." My motto as bishop and Pope, he reminded them, has been "'Totus tuus'. I have always felt Mary's loving and efficacious presence in my life."

John Paul II urged youth to be Christians always and everywhere because "Christianity is not an opinion. ... It is Christ! He is a Person, He is Living!" He entreated them to get to know and love Christ through Mary, and by reciting the Rosary. "Don't be ashamed to recite it alone, on the way to school, the university or work, on the street or in public transportation; recite it among yourselves, in groups, movements,

and associations, and don't hesitate to suggest praying it at home."

"Only Jesus knows your hearts and your deepest desires. ... Mankind has a decisive need for the witness of courageous and free young people who dare to go countercurrent and proclaim strongly and enthusiastically their faith in God, Lord and Savior. ... In this time threatened by violence, hatred and war, give witness that only He can give true peace to the hearts of men, to families and to the peoples of the earth."

Vatican Information Service
(Vatican City)

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