

Therefore ask our Lord to teach all men to love sacrifice. Next to the Cross we will discover that we are beloved children of God and we will experience Mary's maternal protection.

Il Tempo, Rome October 15, 1998

"Twenty Years of the Pontificate of John Paul II Have Changed the History of the World," an article published in the newspaper "Il Tempo" of Rome on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the election of Pope John Paul II.

Among many stories about Pope John Paul II, one in particular comes to mind. I was told once that the Pope, at the end of a long day of hard work, received someone in his apartment. John Paul II's tiredness was apparent as he slowly walked over to greet the person in question. After greeting the Holy Father and kissing his hand, he said to him with filial affection: "Your Holiness, you are very tired." John Paul II answered: "I have no right not to be tired at this hour of the day. Otherwise it would be a sign that I hadn't fulfilled my duties."

I think these words tell us a great deal about the Pope. For him, the re-

sponsibility God has entrusted to him comes above any other consideration. His health, his time, his entire life belong to God, and out of love for God, to all mankind, whom he is called to serve.

At times people have asked the Pope: What is your personal prayer like? What do you tell God in the intimacy of your heart? John Paul II once answered: "The Pope's prayer . . . has an added dimension. *In his concern for all the Churches* every day the Pontiff must open his prayer, his thought, his heart to the entire world. Thus a kind of *geography of the Pope's prayer* is sketched out. It is a geography of communities, churches, societies, and also of the problems that trouble the world today." (*Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, p. 23).

A pilgrimage of prayer. Praying for the problems of all men and women. "Trips" that John Paul II takes "in his thoughts and in his heart," to fulfill his mission as Pontiff, as a bridge between God and man. Such is the prayer of the Pope, and this explains why those who hear his words realize that his voice is not the tiresome public clamor that sometimes benumbs and bewilders us.

It is not hard to see that the Holy Father speaks with authority, with an authority that comes directly from Jesus, from the One who is the Word, from the Gospel that will never pass away even though heaven and earth should pass away (cf *Mt 5:18*). For the whole Church transmits the message of Jesus Christ.

At the Pope's side millions of men and women feel themselves united by the bonds of faith, which transcend any other ties of history or culture. At the Pope's side one sees the mystery of the Church as the family of God, and of each man and woman as a child of God. Those immense crowds that Pope John Paul II has accustomed us to in these 20 years hold a very clear message. No other leader has ever attracted multitudes like these. This phenomenon cannot be explained by sociology or theories of communications. Behind the Pope's words and gestures, behind the affection, both spontaneous and deep, that he enkindles throughout the whole

world, behind the hope that he transmits to today's men and women, there is a plan of God courageously taken up and a history that leads back to Jesus Christ.

John Paul II, on the anniversary of his election, will once again traverse the world through his prayer. In all certainty he will pray for us and for our problems. On that day, Catholics, and many other men of good will, will also remember him in their prayers, asking God to grant the Holy Father joy and peace. They will try to express their thanks for the generosity with which he has exercised his pontificate for these past 20 years.

Pastoral Trips

The Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, made a number of pastoral trips in August and September.

The first of these, from July 31 to August 10, brought him to Australia and New Zealand. Bishop Echevarría arrived in Sydney on the afternoon of July 31. He dedicated his first two days to informal get-togethers with faithful of the Prelature, encouraging them to carry out a daring apostolate to spread Christ's teaching to all sectors of the country. On a number of occasions he urged them to deal affectionately and apostolically with people of other religions. During these days, he met with large groups of young people at Creston College and at Warrane College.

Creston is a residence for women students situated close to the campus of the University of New South Wales, and Warrane is a student residence affiliated with the university. The students offered Bishop Echevarría some gifts of welcome and asked him a number of questions. The Prelate encouraged them to persevere in their Christian life and to help their friends.

On Monday, August 3, he visited Redfield, a boys high school, touring the school facilities and greeting teachers and parents. Afterward, on the patio, the school band provided a musical presentation, and Bishop Echevarría directed some words to the students. Several days later he visited Tangara, a high school for girls.