

**A PROFOUND GAZE AT VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT CONTEMPLATING  
THE HEART OF BL. JOHN PAUL II  
Mother Adela, scjtm**



### He Lived to Give Himself

Blessed John Paul II left a profound and lasting mark in our hearts. He was a man who transmitted joy, the joy of Christian hope, the true joy that is fruit of a gift without conditions, without limits, without barriers. His whole life was a luminous sign of the true happiness of the human heart: to love and serve God daily without holding anything back, in every moment, in every place, and in every circumstance.

The spokesman of the Holy See during the Pontificate of John Paul II was an excellent witness of how the Pope spent himself at the service of all. "The Pope does not waste a minute on his trips. He has an enormous physical resistance as a product of his conviction to give himself to everyone without measure. On these trips, the Pope held nothing back. One day, I dared to ask him: "Holy Father, are you very tired?"...His answer was: "I don't know." The pope was exceedingly sincere, he did not know if he was tired because he didn't think of himself. "He doesn't pay any attention to himself at all." *"If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit himself?" (Lk 9:23-25)*

### What are You Thinking of Doing with Your Life?

This question that Bl. John Paul II asked so many times to youth during his encounters seems to resound with more strength now that he continues asking it from the House of the Father. Today, like yesterday, Bl. John Paul II tells us that it is necessary for us to be willing to risk everything to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength and that we are capable of doing so. We must sail the ocean; we must go out into the deep. To stay on the shore considering what the other side would be like or if I have the capacity to row, or if it is convenient for me to cross, or if it is the moment to leave everything and climb into the boat before doing other things...all this is the cause of a nostalgia, or sentimental longing, that only ends in a profound existential depression.



"Someone said to him: 'I will follow you wherever you go.' Jesus answered him, 'Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head.' And to another he said, 'Follow me.' But he replied, '[Lord,] let me go first and bury my father.' But he answered him, 'Let the dead bury their dead.' But you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.' And another said, 'I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say farewell to my family at home.' [To him] Jesus said, 'No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God.'" (Lk 9:57-62)

We must launch ourselves in obedience to the voice, to the call, of Christ and go out into the deep, for only in this way will there be a miraculous catch in our own life, and then in our mission. We must enter the ocean to walk on the water. It is not in the imprudence of some sports in which our lives are so much at risk. No! It is the conviction and determination necessary to respond to the risk of following Christ wherever He leads us. But in this case, the risk is not to lose one's life in an accident, but to lose it in the total donation of self, which in the end, is the most fecund way to gain it.

### Seek the Truth and You Will Find It

Among so many things that John Paul II taught young people, and all men and women of today, was not to be afraid of asking fundamental questions...it is necessary to ask them since to fundamental questions we have a responsibility to give fundamental answers. In a world whose contemporary culture has a strong tendency toward superficiality, to not enter into the depth of life, the reason for our existence, the search for the roots of our actions, words or choices, of the triviality of analyzing the experiences we live...to this world--young people, children, and adults--John Paul presents us with his own testimony of

life, to seek the most profound reasons of what happens in our heart, of the actions we do, the choices we make, of the words we use. He taught us not to be afraid to go out into the deep of the Heart of God and the human heart. *"Break down the barriers of superficiality and fear! Recognizing that you are "new" men and women regenerated by the grace of Baptism... You will discover the truth about yourselves and your inner unity, and you will find ... peace."* (WYD, 1996). John Paul II taught us that it is essential, to achieve human and Christian maturity, to ask fundamental questions, to which we have to responsibly give answers that are equally fundamental for the human person, for our heart, for the present and future of our life. This includes understanding our past, with its lights and its shadows, and from these experiences "to build new things" because Jesus tells us, *"Behold, I make all things new."* (Rev 21:5)

### Be Not Afraid!



We still hear the voice of John Paul II which calls us to not be afraid. We must live our Christian life with audacity, with decision, with determination. Love is bold! True love, teaches St. Paul, is different: *"It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."* (1 Cor 13:7) To respond to God, to His call, to His loving and perfect will, requires a daring love, a love that can do anything, that hopes in all things, that overcomes all things because it is a love with solid roots, discerned not based on feelings but on the deepest convictions. It is a daring and determined love, a decided love that sustains the choice in times of trial...a persevering and faithful love...in the end, a love worthy of being called "love".

Jesus calls us to the heights of love...He knows that we are capable of giving life, of donating it, even dying for love, of suffering for it and even the radicality of choosing to become a blessing for His disciples..." *Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you [falsely] because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you."* (Mt 5:11-12)

Jesus calls us to follow Him, and leaving everything, to begin an adventure of love and of generosity of life, with full freedom, with the freedom of heart that does not walk with so many attachments and riches. To follow Him, we must leave it behind, since what He offers us is a new Everything...His Everything which "fills the hungry with good things." (Lk 1:53)

Jesus calls with a love, a love capable of satisfying, of quenching the most intimate hunger and thirst of the human heart...yes he calls in love because the Father has created us so that one day, at one historic moment of our life, while we are fishing beside the ocean of our realities of life, we might hear the voice of Jesus voice say to us, *"Come, leave everything, and follow me..."* (cf. Lk 5:27) Jesus calls and he shows us the path of a sincere and total response...His call is demanding because it presents a narrow path like as the sure path to live in His will. His call presents us with high goals, elevated choices...He raises us from the dust of our mediocrity, or our fear, our weakness or comfort, and tells us that in His plan of life, the primacy of the love of God and humanity, unconditional service to men, zeal for His kingdom to the point of martyrdom, the Gospel values are the supreme rule of life—all this is its foundation and goal. John Paul II told young people in a message in 1996: *"Jesus is a demanding friend. He points to lofty goals; he asks us to go out of ourselves in order to meet him, entrusting to him our whole life: "Whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the Gospel will save it" (Mk 8:35). The proposal may seem difficult, and, in some cases, frightening. But – I ask you – is it better to be resigned to a life without ideals, to a world made in our image and likeness, or rather, generously to seek truth, goodness, justice, working for a world that reflects the beauty of God, even at the cost of facing the trials it may involve?"*

### Life is a Vocation in Itself

We were created by love and with a loving divine reason for our existence. *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you."* (Jr 1:5)

It is a gift of God, knowing that our life, as the Holy Father Benedict XVI has told us, "is not an accident," but a fruit of the design of love of God. Our greatest task before this free gift of God, is to discover the vocation of my life...what is the path



of love and total donation of self by which I will achieve the full realization of my being? What is the design of love, the plan of love for which I was created? When God thought of you, what did He think? What did He say to your soul? What unique and unrepeatable role should you occupy in history? How does God need me to build His Kingdom here on earth? How can I be leaven in the world so that the values of the Kingdom may build a society, a new civilization? How can I spread His Word, the seed, in the soil of the contemporary world? How can I live my primary vocation to love the Lord with all my heart, all my soul, and all my strength? How can I do the greatest good for humanity? How can I make of



my life a sincere gift of self, in totality, unconditionality, and permanence? Only by asking ourselves these questions, *"life takes on the value of a "gift received which, by its nature, tends to become a good given."* (World Day for Vocations, 2001)

Youth is a privileged time to prepare your hearts and form it to listen to all that Jesus has to tell you...to listen to Him ask these questions...and for you to go out into the deep with courage and generosity, answering these fundamental questions. Youth is a privileged time to spend on the shore of the ocean awaiting the encounter with Jesus who will indicate to you how and where you should go out into the deep, always sure that life is not a drifting boat, that the vocation of each person has a place to occupy in the ocean of history, in the great family of God in which we have a place to occupy, a role to play, a service to lend, a mission to fulfill. Each choice of love, however humble and simple it may be, is a fiat that causes, in a simple but effective way, effects of grace, a "ripple effect" in history... The history of humanity is written with the fiats of so many men and women who have given their life for love of God and love of humanity. History has also been written by those who, listening to the invitation of God, have not wanted to leave everything, and have gone by another path, leaving Jesus with a sadness in His gaze (cf. Lk 18:18-27). Do you believe that there can be something greater for the human person than to be called to be all for Jesus and to bring Him- through the spiritual womb of our hearts- across the mountains and oceans of all humanity, of all human hearts?

*"Youth is the appropriate time to discern and become more radically aware that life cannot develop cut off from God and others. It is the time to confront the great questions of the choice between selfishness and generosity. In a word: the young person finds himself before an unrepeatable opportunity to orient his whole existence to the service of God and man, thus contributing to the construction of a more Christian world, and as such, more human."* (To Youth, Asuncion, Paraguay 1988, trans. SCTJM)

### Free to Give Ourselves Freely

Our great dignity is that we have the God-given capacity to choose freely..."No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down on my own." (Jn 10:18)

The youth of today must be formed with diligence and responsibility to be ready for the encounter with Christ, to be able to give a fiat to the vocation that the Lord will invite you to embrace, or better said, to that original vocation written in your souls from your creation, but that in a precise moment must be unveiled before your own eyes when Jesus stands in front of you and unrolls the scroll, as He did in the synagogue, and proclaims the announcement of your vocation..."Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." (Lk 4:21)

*"To consider life as a vocation encourages interior freedom, stirring within the person a desire for the future, as well as the rejection of a notion of existence that is passive, boring, and banal." (JPII, Message for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, 2001)*

A vocation is the fruit of attentive listening and the free acceptance and response to the will of God, the will that is a plan of love and blessing for the human heart. A vocation is the fruit of a dialogue of the Heart of God with the human heart, and vice versa.... God invites, reveals, proposes the path to follow as a concrete form of total donation of oneself...and the human heart should respond, with full freedom and with pure intention...love must triumph in the human heart as it did in the Heart of Mary. Her Immaculate Heart, formed in the total donation and forgetfulness of self to occupy its place in the plan of salvation, responded: *"Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to thy word."* (Lk 1:38)



This response of Our Lady speaks to us of the interior freedom of Her Heart: to give herself is her free choice; to place herself at the service of the plan of God for the good of humanity is her choice; to respond with the totality of her "personal, unique and unrepeatable 'I,'" is her free choice. She was fully free, because she chose with freedom and with a sense of responsibility, the vocation that was in a specific moment of history presented by a heavenly messenger..."in the fullness of time" ...the divine reason for her existence is revealed..."in the fullness of time"...it was up to her to give her response of love. To each one of us, in the "fullness of our personal time" "to embark upon the path of our vocational journey," the voice of God will present itself in our hearts and will say...."Follow me." (Mt 4:19)

In this encounter, in this dialogue of love, of mutual correspondence, of invitation, call and response, is an event that transforms the whole horizon of life... It is the encounter with the Person of Christ who in that precise moment presents before our eyes...the purpose of the Father for us to achieve the fullness of our existence. This encounter causes in the human heart a fundamental decision of life as a fruit of knowing the design of love of God, as Pope Benedict XVI tells us in the Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 1: "We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us". We have come to believe in God's love: in these words the Christian can express the fundamental decision of his life. Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction."

#### **A Vocation is Always an Journey: a Pilgrimage of Faith**

Let us remember how Bl. John Paul II recounts in his book, "Gift and Mystery" chapter 1, his own journey, "sometimes uphill and difficult to climb" to arrive at the peak of a sincere conviction that God was calling him to be a priest. Vocational discernment is a story of love, of battles and triumphs. Let us listen to John Paul II himself briefly tell us his story, his vocational journey:

"The story of my priestly vocation? It is known above all to God. At its deepest level, every vocation to the priesthood is a *great mystery*; it is a gift which infinitely transcends the individual. Every priest experiences this clearly throughout the course of his life. Faced with the greatness of the gift, we sense our own inadequacy.



"A vocation is a mystery of divine election: 'You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide' (Jn 15:16). 'And one does not take the honor upon himself, but he is called by God, just as Aaron was' (Heb 5:4). 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations' (Jer 1:5). These inspired words cannot fail to move deeply the heart of every priest.

"So when we speak of vocation," the Pope tells us, referring particularly to priests as he speaks of his own vocation, "and give witness, we must do so with great humility, knowing that God *has called us to a holy vocation, not according to our works but according to his own design and the grace bestowed on us.*" (2 Tm 1:9) At the same time, we realize that human words are insufficient to do justice to the mystery which the priesthood [or the consecrated vocation] involves.

"To me it seems essential to state this at the outset, so that what I say about my own path to the priesthood can be properly understood." (Gift and Mystery, ch. 1) "Even though my vocation had been, in a certain sense, announced during my adolescence, it was not until the Second World War broke out in September 1939 when I began working first in a rock quarry and then in the Solvay factory. It was precisely in this difficult situation that my priestly vocation matured. It matured amidst sufferings, those of my nation; it matured in physical work, among the workers; it matured thanks to the spiritual direction I received, especially from my confessor. In October 1942, I presented myself in the Major Seminary of Krakow and was admitted. Even though I kept working as a worker in the Solvay factory, I became a clandestine seminarian. Until I was ordained a priest on November 1, 1946 in the private chapel of Cardinal Adam Stefan Sapieha." (Speech on the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Presbyterorum ordinis, October 27, 1995, trans. SCTJM)

This whole vocational journey of John Paul II had many stars, luminous influences (family, friends, priests, religious, the factory...but above all, his filial relationship with Our Lady) which helped him along the way towards his vocational path, and each one illumined for him the path of fulfilling the will of God for his life, of that design of the Creator, who not only makes us creatures, but calls, prepares us with gifts, conditions, environments, presents and crosses, presences and absences, that form our hearts for our future response. Nothing is simply an accident, even though it may be painful, like the loss of a mother, brother and father. In the life of Karol Wojyla, everything was a formative and sanctifying journey for the day in which he would have to give a personal, conscious, and timely response to Christ and His Church.

### Because you are precious in my eyes and honored, and I love you (Is 43:4)

*"A vocation touches the very roots of the human soul. It is an interior call of God directed to man: to a unique and unrepeatabe man. The plan of God for man exists even before his conception in the womb of his mother. It is eternal. This eternal plan of God is at the beginning of each vocation. Man must discover it...and must discover it with skill. Nevertheless, it does not take place without interior struggles...but grace and the strength of God are greater than human weakness." (Cuenca, Ecuador, 1985, trans. SCTJM)*



Our vocation is eternally guarded in the Heart of God...there with His powerful, infinite, and eternal love, He guards it, He cares for it, He prepares it, He makes it grow, He orders it, He directs it, sometimes among stony paths caused by our personal choices.... Yes, our vocation is hidden in God.... How beautiful! God is the only one who knows it! For this reason the invitation to follow Him in the path of a vocation is always a divine initiative, a divine call, a divine choice, divine revelation, communication to the human heart. This is why that we must be vigilant, attentive to the voice of God...this vigilance and solicitous attention to the voice of God is a fundamental and permanent attitude of the true disciple of Christ. In His opportune moment, He will knock at the door of your heart and will call you by name. He will reveal His design of love; He will indicate the path to follow, the conditions to accomplish it....We must be attentive to His voice...to build a vocation on solid soil: *"Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock." (Mt. 7:24)*

### The Pearl We Must Discover

The religious vocation is not a product of our initiative or of our personal project; it is not even our creativity that can produce it...a vocation is always the initiative of God who guards the treasure hidden in His Heart until we are ready to discover the precious pearl and, discovering it, we are disposed to sell everything, leave everything, to possess the pearl. *"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it." (Mt 13: 44-46)*



*"Our vocation, Before it becomes an accomplished fact within an individual, before taking on the form of a choice and personal decision, a vocation refers back to another choice, a choice on the part of God, which has preceded the human choice and decision...Our vocation is hid in the eternal mystery of God before it becomes an accomplished fact within us, before it becomes our human "yes", our choice and decision." (Letter to Consecrated Persons, 1988)*

### Setting Out Towards the Goal

Understanding this fundamental principle of vocation, we must reflect on the fact that if the Lord calls us to give ourselves totally to Him, to follow Him leaving everything...to love Him with an undivided heart, with the totality of our human and Christian person, with all our potentialities, gifts and weaknesses, we should not hesitate or become paralyzed; we should not look back, but ahead with determination to run the course that we have in front of us. *"[But] whatever gains I had, these I have come to consider a loss because of Christ. More than that, I even consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have accepted the loss of all things and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may gain Christ....forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God's upward calling, in Christ Jesus." (Phl 3:1-14)*



We have to pray persistently to have the necessary clarity, not the clarity of curiosity that desires to preserve itself or go out only if one has the whole plan for the pilgrimage through life, but we must have the necessary clarity that comes from Christ, from His Word, from His Voice, From His Love, to respond with promptitude, like Our Lady, to His call to then go out with intrepidity and trust, with a joyful 'Yes!' We must give ourselves with courage, enthusiasm and without reserve, trusting that He faithful to His promises...*"I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus."* (Phl 1:6)

### To Believe in His Promises

We must give the Lord who calls us a 'yes', small and simple, but sincere and firm.... We must have the bravery, the courage, to believe in the Gospel and in the promises Jesus has made to those who leave everything to follow Him, to walk closer with Him, to be His close friends and those He sends out...His messengers, His apostles. *"And everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for the sake of my name will receive a hundred times more, and will inherit eternal life."* (Mt 19:29) The Lord promises us that He will give us a hundred times more...of the treasures of His Heart, not the things that satisfy the human heart in a worldly way, but in a primary and abundant way--eternal treasures. We are not alone on the journey of a vocational response; we are not alone in our response... *"To whom I have said, You are my servant; I chose you, I have not rejected you—Do not fear: I am with you; do not be anxious: I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand."* (Is 41:9-10)

*"Dear young people, open your minds and hearts to the beauty of all that God has made and to his special, personal love for each one of you. Young people of the world, hear his voice! Hear his voice and follow him!"* (Prayer Vigil in Denver, 1993)

### A Fiat which Marks the Heart and the Totality of the Human Person

Faith, love and the choices for God and His Kingdom are not to be reduced to only words or vague and passing feelings. Love is a choice to give life and this gift has a profound meaning, it has sure and concrete implications for our way of living. Our response of love to the call of God must impregnate all the dimensions of the human person. To love God and give Him our whole life means to live our whole life with coherency in light of the Gospel, particularly following His "way of life," the "evangelical counsels" which require a generous, faithful, sincere and total gift of ourselves. It demands that we correspond to the Love of God and a full docility so that this love may transform our whole person, that it form and transform us. It is a love without fear, because true love conquers fear; *"There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment, and so one who fears is not yet perfect in love."* (1 Jn 4:18)



Yes, love conquers fear because the person calls knows that he can say: *"I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me."* (Phl 4:13)

*"Love causes man to find fulfillment through the sincere gift of self. To love means to give and to receive something which can be neither bought nor sold, but only given freely and mutually."* (Letter to Families, 11) Love that is donated, and a fiat that is given as "response of love" to the call of God, is a love that is can only be given with purity, with decision, with coherence, with dedication. It is a demanding love and at the same time, a love that elevates and brings us to the fullness of true happiness, or rather, brings the person called to the fullness of grace, wisdom and stature before God and men (cf. Lk 2:52). The love that the religious vocation requires acquires its true splendor and beauty precisely in its demands which elevates the potentialities of the human heart and brings us to respond with the totality of love, with heroic love, a love that is engraved in the heart like a seal that not even fire can put out, nor rivers flood, nor time undermine...(cf. Song 8)...It is a love that demands to be cultivated, purified, elevated, beautified...to be given...*"But this is precisely the source of its beauty: by the very fact that it is demanding, it builds up the true good of man and allows it to radiate to others."* (Letter to Families, 14)

### "I Consecrate Myself for Them" (John 17: 19)

A vocation is a personal gift, but not private...consecrated love should always pass through the world doing good, like Jesus did. A vocation is not individual property, but a personal donation to build a new civilization,

a new world, a new land, a new humanity. God needs us to continue saving humanity. He needs our 'yes' to continue doing good. God calls us to become participants in His salvific mission in each historical moment. The religious vocation is a 'yes' to God and a 'yes' to man, to those who depend on our total dedication to God to serve them with the goodness of the love that God has poured into our hearts (cf. Rom 5).

*"Jesus said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." Then they abandoned their nets and followed him." (Mk 1:17-18)* To discern and decide to respond to the invitation of the Lord to leave behind the nets in order to become fishers of men, we must think also of those fish, those hungry hearts who hope to be nourished with the Word of God, the Truth of the Gospel, the salvific power of the sacraments toward which we guide them. We must think of the fish that stay without being gathered in the net of the womb of the Church. We must think of the children who do not know God, who will not be catechized, of the young people who will find no direction, no meaning for their lives and their futures....We must think of the married couples who will not learn to live the dignity of their vocation to married love, the dignity and mission of the Christian family. We must think of all those who will not have access to read or listen to the Gospel and the Magisterium of the Church explained in a simple and accessible way. We have to think of the many empty spaces that the many "no's" of so many young people who, by staying attached to their personal riches, have left and that the world or the enemy have taken in violence. We have to think of those who one day could become our spiritual sons and daughters if we have enough generosity to embrace the spiritual maternity that is the fruit of total donation and consecration to God. We must think of the elderly who, only because of our prayer and a simple visits, keep thinking that they are valuable in society. We must think of Our Mother the Church, that her womb may be fruitful, and that our 'fiat', may fill her maternal womb with many more children, so that She may leap for joy. Thus we will be, small and poor, a cause of the joy of our Mother, the Church.



Yes, the vocation to a closer following of Christ, of total consecration to Him, is a personal gift that has at the same time, a task, a universal mission...a mission that spans the visible and invisible. To think of our fundamental choices in life, of our response to the invitation of Christ to leave everything and follow Him, we must think of how much wheat and how few laborers there are. *"The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest."* (Lk 10:2)...and so it is...we must think that, perhaps, our vocation may be the fruit of so many who have prayed, who have suffered, who have even offered their lives, so that the Lord might send workers to give their lives to work for the Kingdom and extend it through the whole world. We should think of how perhaps our poor hands are necessary, how they can cooperate in building the vineyard, the family of God.

*"Dear Young People, when deciding your future, you must not decide for yourself alone!" (To Young People in Scotland, 1982)* The religious vocation must be discerned in light of God and of the needs of humanity. This is love! This is to say the same thing that Jesus said in His priestly prayer before entering into His Passion and revealing to us the sublime act of His donation for the good of humanity: *"And I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth."* (Jn 17: 19)

When Bl. John Paul II found himself prostrated in the chapel of the Archbishop's residence, alone...for his seminary classmates had disappeared, having been killed or sent to prisons or concentration camps, he tells us that in his interior, with a profound pain, he asked himself why God had preserved his life. Karol Wojtyla himself tells us his own conclusion, matured on the cross of his own life and the life of his country: *"I was preserved to give myself"....*

In many ways, young men and women who read this simple reflection of my heart, have experienced being preserved in the midst of so many adverse situations in their own lives, and I ask that they have the same generosity of heart as Karol Wojtyla to say to God and to humanity: *"I have been preserved to give myself"....* *"No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down on my own."* (Jn 10:18)

### **Preparing Our Hearts with the Oil (cf. Mt 25:1-13)**

God is Love....and deserves full correspondence of our hearts...a response of love. To come to discover the "precious pearl," the vocation hidden from eternity in the Heart of God for which we were created, it is necessary to prepare our heart with the oil that keeps the lamp burning so that when He comes to find us, we might be ready. It is indispensable to have the oil of the Sacramental life, of the Holy Mass, of assiduous



prayer, of a sincere and heart-to-heart dialogue, dialogue of listening to His Word, and of listening to the voice of Our Mother and Teacher, the Church, in the lamp of our heart. The oil of a filial relationship with the Mother of Christ and Our Mother, who is the first heart totally consecrated to God and in whose maternal womb all vocations are conceived and given birth, is indispensable. It is also necessary to have the adequate help of a loving and very wise spiritual director. The clear understanding of the dignity of the gift and the dignity of the human response; the humble and certain perception that the gifts and goods are received to be given, and a life of generous giving and service to others.. Without ever forgetting that "to deny ourselves" is a necessary plan of life to strengthen our will for greater choices of love.

"Christ needs you and calls you to help millions of your brothers and sisters to be saved...Open your hearts to Christ, to His law of love without placing conditions on your availability, without fear of giving a definitive response because love never sets, it has no limits. Believe in Christ and in His program of life for you. Only Christ has the words of eternal life." (Address in Spain, 1982, trans. SCTJM) His call is demanding because he invites you to be 'captured' completely by Him, in a way your existence is contemplated under a different light. God counts on you, and His plans, in a certain way, depend on your collaboration, on the offering of your life and the generosity with which you follow Him." (Address, 1980, trans. SCTJM)

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Tenderness*

***Live to give yourself!***

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