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## AN AMAZING PRESENCE

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Starting last week, I undertook to send you excerpts from my 1997 Pastoral Letter entitled, *Holy Spirit, Teach Us about Jesus*.

### « I WAS A CHILD »

When we meet future mothers we are generally filled with marvel and hope. In our country where the unborn child has no legal rights, it is deplorable to have such a legislative void. It is to be hoped that courageous politicians will correct this situation so as to ensure greater expansion to the promotion of life. In the past few months the Church as a whole has called for justice for children to be born, and it sees in every new birth the marvellous gift of life and a promise for tomorrow. The Church knows and believes that Jesus, the Word of the Father, took the same route to come to us: « *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.* » [Matthew 25:21] To be born in these days is a privilege that must be heralded everywhere. Happy the eyes that see what we see. Happy the ears that hear what we hear. Our times are inhabited with the Spirit of Jesus, Jesus lives in the hearts of our young people and shows them his concern that they may never be the victims of violence of abuse of all kinds. Young people, you are presence of Jesus in the midst of the world.

### « I WAS A STUDENT »

At the heart of every school or deanery, the presence of our youth must not leave us indifferent. It is often a difficult apprenticeship to life, for them, and they must often learn many demanding things. And our times, even as we recognise their beauty and the fact that they are God's times, still remain difficult ones, times full of new challenges. Our youth must travel new and different roads. The unknown generates fear. In our youth their hearts contain hopes and anxieties, aspirations and suffering. Students can turn into winners, but they can also encounter discouraging failures. But through the major investments made by the youth themselves, by their parents and teachers, by many groups within society, one must remain grounded in hope: a new era has been grafted to yesterday's heritage. Students, you are presence of Jesus who grew in wisdom and grace, in our world.

### « I WAS A WORKER, A LABOURER »

In meeting office workers, labourers, and business people I am reminded of Jesus, son of a carpenter, giving to the world the Gospel of Nazareth. Created into the image and likeness of God, thousands of our fellow citizens contribute in building up a better and nicer world, by their daily work; they share in the glorious work of creation, a huge construction site where every human is called on to develop and grow. But sad to say, such is not the lot of thousands of young people who have yet to find a first job, and of other thousands of older people who are now on employment insurance or who must rely on social welfare. Jesus, who came to us so that we might have life in abundance, reminded us of the greatness of work when he said, « *Good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your master.* » [Cf. Romans 8:38-39] Working people, you are presence of Jesus working in our midst; unemployed workers, you are presence of Jesus seeking redress in our midst.

### « I WAS A LOVER »

How beautiful it is to meet lovers enthralled by one another, who can form a project of love in profound communion with one another! In the 200 or so weddings that we celebrate each year, I believe that these are truly signs of faith, hope, and love. With total trust in one another, they desire to lovingly carry out what they hold most dearly, the mission entrusted to them, to repeat once more to all of us that love is still possible today, and to remind us that the Lord loved us to the very end. They also remind us that neither distress nor anxiety, no persecution, neither the present nor the future will ever be able to separate us from the love of God. [Cf. Romans 8:38-39] They know that love is patient, love is kind, it rejoices in the truth, it bears all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. [Cf. 1 Corinthians 13:4-6] Discovery of love leads to discovery of God; the discovery of Christian lovers can lead to an encounter with Jesus himself. Lovers, you are in the world presence of Jesus the lover of humankind.

### « I WAS A PARENT »

If it is not always easy to be a child, and being a parent is no sinecure, either. It is often said that to give birth to a child is to sign a contract of obligations for thirty years. Actually, it is for far longer. As a matter of fact, bringing a child into the world is to surrender one's life daily for this child. Giving birth is to welcome life and help it grow, to lead the child to maturity, to educate the child that God has confided to our care. Despite misunderstandings, frustrations, and the difficult task of passing on our values to our offspring, parents can also experience a certain joy, not only the one of knowing that one has accomplished one's duty, but also that of seeing their child develop fully. The difficult sacrifices made, the countless hours spent in service to their children, the financial and personal resources expended for their well-being, all these are testaments to the importance of the task. Parents, you are presence of Jesus the Good Shepherd, in the midst of the world.

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