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## WATCHERS OF THE DAWN

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Each day of this valued Lenten period can be for everyone – especially our youth – a favourable opportunity to prepare themselves properly for the World Youth Day which is taking place from July 18 to 28. In last week's message I recalled the mission with which I charged our young friends who were killed in an automobile accident, on December 29. I also reflected on the meaning of the words "salt and light". Today I would like to pursue this reflection by stopping at the words Pope John Paul II employs in speaking about the mission of youth in the new millennium.

### **"WATCHMAN, HOW GOES THE NIGHT?"**

The Holy Father uses these words from the prophet Isaiah (21:11-12) to describe the youth as "watchmen of the dawn" and "sentinels of the new millennium". A watchman's main task is to be on the lookout, to give up his night's sleep. This we can do to finish a job or to avoid being surprised by the enemy. To watch is to be vigilant, to fight tiredness and negligence in order to reach the goal. For believers, their goal is to be ready to welcome the lord, when he comes. That is why he is watchful, that she is vigilant "by living in the night without being of the night". As father Aimé Duval sang, "The Lord will come again, he has promised it, he will return in the night: do not be asleep, at the time!" Watchfulness is a character of the disciple who hopes for and expects the return of Jesus; it consists first of all in being alert. The Christian is "child of the light", awake and watchful, ready to resist evil.

### **"WATCHMAN, WHERE ARE YOUR VALUES?"**

More than ever today's youth are called to watch over the values which society, mass media, advertisers and idol-makers try to impose on them. The Holy Father asks our youth today: "What are you doing to your brothers and sisters?" What are your values? What kind of life are you in the process of building? How are you "light" to our world? "The light which Jesus speaks of in the Gospel is the light of faith, God's free gift, which enlightens the heart and clarifies the mind. It is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God on the face of Christ' (2 Cor. 4:6). That is why the words of Jesus explaining his identity and his mission are so important: 'I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life' (Jn. 8:12)."

### **"WATCHMAN, WHERE IS YOUR LIGHT?"**

Our personal encounter with Christ bathes life in a new light, sets us on the right path, and ends us out to be his witnesses. This new way of looking at the world and at people, which comes to us from him, leads us more deeply into the mystery of faith, which is not just a collection of theoretical assertions to be accepted and approved by the mind, but an experience to be had, a truth to be lived, the salt and light of all reality.

### **“WATCHMAN, WHO IS YOUR GOD?”**

In this secularized age, when many of our contemporaries think and act as if God did not exist or are attracted to irrational forms of religion, it is the youth who must show that faith is a personal decision which involves all of life. May the Gospel be the measure and guide of life's decisions and plans! Then they will be missionaries in all that they say and do, and wherever they work and live they will be signs of God's love, credible witnesses to the loving presence of Jesus Christ. Let us never forget: “No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a bushel” (Mt. 5:15!

### **“WATCHMAN, DO YOU WANT TO LIVE A HOLY LIFE?”**

Just as salt gives flavour to food and light illumines the darkness, so too holiness gives full meaning to life and makes it reflect God's glory. How many saints, especially young saints, can we count in the Church's history! In their love for God their heroic virtues shone before the world, and so they became models of life which the Church has held up for imitation by all. Let us remember only a few of them: Agnes of Rome, Thérèse of Lisieux, Pier Giorgio Frassati, Marcel Callo or again Kateri Tekakwitha, the young Iroquois called “the Lily of the Mohawks”. Through the intercession of this great host of witnesses, the thrice-holy God desires to make saints of the saints of the third millennium!

### **“WATCHMAN, PREPARE FOR THE WYD!”**

It is time to get ready for the Seventeenth World Youth Days. The holy Father invites the youth to read his letter on the new millennium which he wrote at the beginning of 2001 to accompany all Christians on this new stage in the life of the Church and humanity: “A new century, a new millennium are opening in the light of Christ. But not everyone can see this light. Ours is the wonderful and demanding task of becoming its ‘reflection’.” Yes, now is the time for mission! In our diocese and our parishes, in our movements, associations and communities, Christ calls us, the Church welcomes us and wishes to be our home of communion and prayer. We must study the Word of God and let it enlighten our minds and hearts. We must draw strength from the sacramental grace of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. It is important to “visit” the Lord in the heart to heart contact that is Eucharistic adoration. Day after day, we will receive new energy to help us to bring comfort to the suffering and peace to the world. By contemplating the light radiant on the face of the Risen Christ, let us learn to live as “children of the light and children of the day” (Eph. 5:9).

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