



**Messages**  
from the Churches  
**to Faith and Light**



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On several occasions, the Popes have displayed their benevolence towards the Faith and Light communities and have warmly encouraged them.

This was shown as long ago as the birth of the movement in 1971, by a handwritten letter from Paul VI to the pilgrims at Lourdes. Then in 1975, in Rome itself, we received an unforgettable welcome and a new message.

For his part, John Paul II wrote a long letter to all the Faith and Light pilgrims at Lourdes in 1981. Then, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1984, he received the founders, officials and delegates of the movement, giving them confirmation, advice and guidance. In 2001, Pope John Paul II once again spoke to the pilgrims gathered at Lourdes. Then, he received officials and delegates of the international meeting at Castel Gandolfo on the 26<sup>th</sup> September 2002.

In 2008, Benedict XVI would send a message to delegates of the international meeting gathered at Lourdes.

In 2011, Archbishop of Canterbury, Benedict XVI and Reverend Ruth Patterson send messages to the whole movement on the occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Faith and Light.

In 2013, Pope Francis, Archbishop of Canterbury and Reverend Ruth Patterson send messages to the delegates of the international meeting gathered at Leeds (United Kingdom).

In 2018, Pope Francis sends a message to the delegates of the international meeting in Fatqa (Lebanon).

In 2021, he sends a message to Faith and Light for its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and in October sends another message in a private audience.

Here, we publish all these words.

*Subtitles and translations: Faith and Light International*

**Handwritten message  
from His Holiness PAUL VI**

**to the Faith and Light pilgrims,  
gathered at Lourdes for Easter 1971**



**N**ever before, dear friends that are disabled in spirit and sometimes wounded in heart, have you known such a gathering of friendship and prayer around you and for you, very close to the grotto where Our Lady so wanted to converse with the young Bernadette.

**GOD LOVES YOU**

This human care that surrounds you today is the sign of the great Love that God, our Father in Heaven, holds for you and that Jesus, his Beloved Son and your Brother, has

not ceased to show from the outset to person with disabilities of all kinds, to the weak, to prisoners, to the humble: *“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God”* (Luke 6:20). It is enough for you to look upon him with trust, to welcome him with love. And God the Father makes you his child. Christ takes you with him, as one of the limbs of his sacred Body. The Spirit of God lives within you.

### **JESUS SHOWS YOU THE PATH**

Of course, you continue to feel limited in studying, working and entering into a relationship with others, which makes you suffer a great deal. The experts, doctors, educators and those close to you are doing everything within their power to put this right. But all men also carry weaknesses and disabilities within themselves, sometimes secretly.

And, as you have seen over these days, Jesus himself, even though he was the Son of God, found himself stripped of all glory and all power in a moment. He carried his Cross with love. He is risen in Glory. He shows us the path. Saint Paul explains it to us: our body was sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it was sown in weakness, it is raised in power (see 1 Cor. 15:43). Here, dear Sons, is the Good News that We repeat to you from Rome on this Easter morning, in the name of Jesus the Lord.

And as of now on, you are taking part in this new Life of Jesus, by repenting your sins, receiving baptism, communion with the Body of Christ, in loving your brothers. Yes, as of now, rejoice for being loved by God in this way.

### **YOUR PLACE IN SOCIETY**

Be sure of it, you have your place in society. Amongst men who are often intoxicated by profit and efficiency, there you are with your simplicity and your joy, with your gaze that seeks love free of charge, with your wondrous

ability to understand the signs of this love and to respond to it with tenderness. And in the Church, which is above all a House of Prayer, you have even more of a choice role: to be able to understand the secrets of God that often remain hidden from the wise and learned (Luke 10:21); to also be able to ask God for everything which is needed by your relatives, your friends, the priests, the missions, the whole Church, and the people who lack bread, peace and love. We know that Christ listens to you, that you are privileged, that Our Mother the Virgin Mary presents your prayers to him, as at Cana.

### **The solidarity of parents**

And you, dear parents, we are wholeheartedly with you. Oh! We can guess the deep wound that has affected you, and that may always remain open. We bow before the patient courage with which you knew how to face it, and before the privileged love by which you are attached to your child. Mysterious suffering of innocents, that for the believers can only make sense before the Passion of Christ, loaded as it is with the silent presence of the God of love and promised, like the Passion, for the Easter transfiguration! Yes, look upon your child with tenderness, as upon God himself. And may your trial, by the grace of God, join you to the mystery of Christ, stimulate your search for human progress, however flimsy it may be, strengthen your solidarity within your home, and open you up to all other parents of disabled children, whom you understand so much better than others! This faith, this support, this extended solidarity that you are experiencing today, are they not already the start of security?

### **We are launching an appeal to society**

Finally, we are launching an urgent appeal to the whole of society. Friends and neighbours, do not be reticent in

visiting and welcoming these brothers who are close to you with consideration; quite simply, integrate them into your relationships. And you, doctors, psychologists, educators, teachers, social workers, devoted to serve those with intellectual disabilities, We congratulate you for the care and hope that you bring to these poor people. We encourage the relentlessness with which you try to unshackle their faculties. We hope that your testimony, in its materialism, shakes the indifference of a society that no longer knows that life should always be respected, that closes its eyes too willingly on that which is not comfortable, powerful or efficient. May those in power who are responsible for the economy not forget to integrate those who have been disinherited by their countries into their plans, like those in the Third World! For Us, that is the test of this real humanism of which we want so much to take advantage. And may all the pastors of the Church know to surround these impoverished people, like Jesus, with their fondness! May this pilgrimage leave faith and light for everyone in its wake!

We gladly beseech that, as a token of hope, the Blessing of the Saviour, who died and was resurrected for us, may fall upon each of you, dear children with disabilities, and upon your parents and friends.

*From the Vatican, Easter 11<sup>th</sup> April 1971*



**Message from PAUL VI**  
**to the pilgrims of Faith and Light**  
**gathered in Rome**  
**for the Holy Year**



**T**o the dear disabled people of Faith and Light, to their parents and friends, gathered in Rome,

We congratulate you for having wanted, like so many other pilgrims, to gather together in Rome in this Holy Year, to ask God for a new heart, purified and strengthened, and to live as renewed Christians in an extended brotherhood.

To you all, who suffer from some physical disability in order to open up your spirit, we repeat the Good News that the Apostle Peter carried to Rome before us.

**A CHOSEN PLACE IN THE CHURCH**

You have a place in the Heart of Jesus Christ who says to you: *“Come to me and I will give you rest... you will find rest for your souls”* (Matthew 10:28-29). And with Him, you

have a place in the Love of God the Father, who makes you his children, who places his Spirit within you and who will one day make you enter into his full light.

You have a chosen place in the Church, where your simple faith, your prayer, your gaze seeking affection and your generous heart remind Christians of the essential paths that lead to God.

You have a place in the society of men where, thanks be to God, you have a great number of friends who are very attached to you, who support you and count on you.

### **TO THE PARENTS AND EDUCATORS**

As for you, dear parents and youth workers, We would like to strengthen your courage and your hope with all our fatherly affection. The loyalty of your tenderness, your patience and your tenacity in exposing your disabled child or friend to the joys of existence and to the possible progress of their hindered faculties, makes us think of the untiring Love of God in leading men to the full light, of the concern of Christ who always seeks to heal, to save and to bring the Good News to the poor.

May the Lord transform this wound into grace, that draws you near to the Passion of Christ! May your home bear the trial with strengthened solidarity, may your neighbours and friends show themselves to be welcoming and understanding, simply and humbly! May those responsible for school, for leisure, for work and for the economy concern themselves even further with rightly integrating these brothers who are part of the human family!

### **EXTRA CREATIVE IMAGINATION**

For in spite of the handsome declarations of principle and numerous initiatives to which We pay homage, isn't our

society running the risk of finally leaving to one side those whose insertion requires extra creative imagination, selfless love and hope? It is nevertheless the case, even when we do not doubt that this is the most significant test of a family full of humanity, of a truly civilised society, all the more of an authentically Christian Church. And these persons with disabilities who hold out their hand to us, do they not also have a message to give us?

Honour to all those who occupy themselves by introducing them into faith and into the light of a more open life! To them, and to the person with disabilities who are here today, and also to all those who were unable to come, our paternal Papal Blessing!

*From the Vatican, 25<sup>th</sup> October 1975*



# **Speech of PAUL VI**

## **in Saint Peter's Basilica**

### **25<sup>th</sup> October 1975**

**D**ear friends,  
In this illuminated basilica, it is Jesus Christ who is our light! “This Jesus, though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him... Come close to Him” (1 Peter 1:8-12). These words are those of Saint Peter the Apostle who gave his life for Jesus in this very place. And I, his humble successor, I repeat them to you so that your joy may be complete.

Passing among you, I would like to make each of you understand: God loves you as you are. He lives in your heart. Give thanks to him. Trust in him. Look: He gives you a place amongst all the other Christians in his Church. You are called upon to form a family with them where each loves the other as a brother. And the Lord reserves a place for you in his Paradise, where everything will be light and peace, with all the saints. In his name, I bless you. And I bless the parents and the friends that God has given to you.

And thank you to you, dear parents and friends, for the solidarity and the faith which you demonstrate. May this stop at Saint Peter's remain a shining memory for you, that it may aid you in bearing the darker, lonelier and more testing days of your existence. And may my Papal Blessing strengthen you!

## **Letter from JOHN PAUL II**

### **to the Faith and Light pilgrims gathered at Lourdes for Easter 1981**



**T**o the dear persons with disabilities of Faith and Light, to their parents and friends,  
Through thought and prayer, I am joining your great gathering of pilgrims by the grotto of Lourdes, during these days that are holy for the whole Church and that bring you a new peace and light on your way of the cross.

#### **Take your place at the heart of the Church**

Jesus, having loved his own, loved them until the end. This love is for you as well, for you first and foremost, who are part of the “poor”, those who suffer in their spirit and in their body, but who often have a better understanding than others of the need for simple and true relationships, loyal friendship, selfless service and of having confidence for every trial. Therefore, enter with Jesus into this love that is given and received.

With Him, you are going through darker moments that come upon you on the evening of the agony and Good Friday: solitude, difficulty in communicating, fear of not receiving the love and understanding that you hope for from others, and all kinds of restrictions that frailty and the conditions of life impose upon you. Jesus invites you to place all

your trust in the Father in Heaven, to offer Him with love that which wounds you, to forgive others when necessary, and to wait patiently for the light that will not fail to come. You have a place at the foot of the Cross with Mary, Mother of Jesus. You are drawing near to it with Saint Bernadette, so simple, so humble, so poor and so serene.

Finally, you are taking part in the great joy of Easter. God resurrected Jesus, his beloved Son; he made him the Lord and Saviour of all, because he is the only Son of God, and he seated him at his right hand, forever in light. And he gives to you already the gift of being his children; as such, baptism, forgiveness and communion are signs that show his love and place the life of glorious Christ within you by uniting you to his Body. He renews your hearts through his Holy Spirit. He makes a promise to you that he will transfigure your whole being, body, mind and spirit, in a face-to-face encounter.

Already you are taking your place at the heart of the Church, to experience this Easter, this passage of the Lord, with all your Christian brothers and sisters. Sing with them the wonders of God! Give freely the joy that you receive freely! Those who surround you bring you a great deal of aid and affection; think of the original part of what you can also bring to them! And the Pope, Successor of Peter, who wanted to tell you again of the privileged love of God, also counts on your prayer.

### **To you who are companions**

I also speak to the parents, youth workers, voluntary companions and friends, of whom there are so many at Lourdes. I would have so many things to say to you. But the long document<sup>1</sup> published by the Holy See on the 4<sup>th</sup>

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March, for “all those who devote themselves to serve disabled people” in this year that is consecrated to them throughout the whole world, already expressed to you “the alive and alert concern” of the Church. Reading this document will strengthen the convictions that already propel you, of the dignity and unique value of each human life, the climate of respect and love that must surround disabled people, and the efforts for integration, normalisation and personalisation from which they must benefit.

Today, to you above all who accompany them so closely throughout their whole life, I would like to express the understanding, sympathy and encouragements of the Church. Welcoming and taking responsibility for your disabled child or friend has committed you to a difficult and demanding path that brings its “shadows” and its “lights” each day. You have understood the full importance of the family circle for this wounded being, or when this is not possible, at least that of an institution or small community that comes close to the family model, where personalised relationships and human warmth allow them, in their own way, to satisfy their profound need for friendship and security, by developing their humane, moral and spiritual qualities as much as possible.

We must hope that many “voluntary educators” will come to your aid, that neighbours will integrate these disabled people more and more into normal relationships instead of marginalising them, and that the whole of society will show increasing solidarity to your devotion by contributing to the supply of adequate means.

### **Witnessing and co-operators of God’s tenderness**

But I also hope that the Christian faith helps you in bearing your trial with courage, serenity and love, since you are so close to these children, as witnesses and co-operators

of God's tenderness. The wound that you yourselves bear is part of the Passion of Christ, who took upon himself the suffering of innocents; it is also a constant invitation to free love, an opening to the gift of God and a call to hope. You will take care to initiate them yourselves into these realities, to which they are mysteriously close for that matter, and the Church will support you with an adapted catechesis. You will also help them to become those who give and collaborate towards a more humane world.

May the communities of Faith and Light and the other initiatives that support the intellectually disabled allow you, in addition to this great, joyous and comforting gathering at Lourdes, to find the support necessary for daily life again and to bring it to other parents! May the Holy Spirit give you his strength and his peace! May Mary, Our Lady of Lourdes, keep your hearts turned in hope towards the Saviour!

Like my predecessor Paul VI, I beseech that the Blessings of Christ, who died and was resurrected for us, be upon you all, dear disabled sons and daughters, parents and friends.

*From the Vatican, 7<sup>th</sup> April 1981*



## **Message from JOHN PAUL II**

**recorded in six languages and broadcast  
in the Basilica of Saint Pius X at Lourdes,  
Easter Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1981**



### **CARRY HIS PEACE EVERYWHERE**

To the dear persons with disabilities of Faith and Light,  
their parents and friends.

May God, the Son, Father and Holy Spirit bless you.  
Christ has risen.

Hallelujah!

The Love of God was spread in our hearts  
by the Holy Spirit that was given to us.

Give thanks without end to the Lord with the Virgin Mary  
and love one another.

He who remains in love,  
remains in God and God in him.

Carry his peace everywhere.

## **Word from JOHN PAUL II**

### **to the founders, leaders and delegates gathered in Rome on March 22<sup>nd</sup> 1984**

**D**ear Friends of Faith and Light, This year several meetings like this have familiarized me with the world of the people with disabilities which is at the heart of your preoccupations, and even of your life. In January I received priests living in L'Arche communities: in February all the members of L'Arche of Trosly-Breuil: and today I am happy to welcome the founders, the coordinators and the delegates of the international Faith and Light movement. Since its foundation at Lourdes thirteen years ago, your movement has taken root in the many countries represented today in your Assembly. The shortness of time at our disposal this morning in Lent of this Holy Year, does not allow me to develop at length the Pilgrimage to Lourdes in 1981. But you will know that you should read into these few words the esteem and affection which I have for you, and my encouragement to you to show a good lead in this work which is so significant for the Church and for today's society.

#### **THE ROAD COVERED**

How much road has been covered in the last twelve years! In the recent past, many children and adults who were wounded with an intellectual disability found themselves isolated, pushed to the margins in many areas of society, without much hope of progress, and often their families, suffering from humiliation, lived through this trial closed in on themselves. Today you have made a great contribution to the fact that these people with disabilities



and their parents and friends benefit from regular meetings in the bosom of communities of love. Personal links are formed which help each one bear the burdens of the other better, and face up together to things, by receiving and giving comfort, esteem, listening and mutual help. The festive atmosphere allows everyone, even the weakest, to express often unsuspected talents, and together savour a healthy joy. These meetings are also marked by prayer and celebrations, which culminate, for Catholics, in a Eucharistic assembly. The charter and constitution which you have adopted clearly expresses these methods, which demand a courageous and lasting commitment, human competence and for co-ordinators and animators a great deal of love.

### **TO DEEPEN YOUR FAITH**

You realise that I am stressing Christian faith. It brings into this field stimulation, an inspiration, a grace which corresponds remarkably to such a work. You cannot

forget your Catholic origins and the intentions of your founders, and I desire that all who share your faith make the necessary efforts to deepen their specific spiritual formation in faithfulness in the teachings of the Church. To everyone, I wish them to draw light from the revelation of the love of God, throughout the Bible, and appreciate in particular the love of Jesus for the poor, and his respect for them. The persons with intellectual disabilities are in a very real sense these poor persons, deprived of the resources on which the power and success of others is built: they are very vulnerable, but precious in the eyes of God, for whom all human life has an inestimable value and every person an inviolable dignity. St. John tells us of Jesus, "having loved his own, he loved them to the end." (John 13, 11). The persons with intellectual disabilities, more than any others, need this love, which is made up of tenderness and fidelity. This gives them security and enables them to blossom. But faith also enables us to discover the possibilities of their special contribution to the world around them, which benefits from experiencing their simplicity of heart, their joy, their thirst for love, their trust. Yes the Gospel is the Good News for these poor, and their friends, without forgetting that they themselves witness to the Gospel in their own special way.

### **YOUR INTEGRATION IN THE CHURCH AND THE SOCIETY**

Your movement has grown; it is structured, faithful to its origins and respecting consciences, and keeping the focus on the same ends, both human and spiritual. There are still questions being asked, concerning for example your status in the Catholic Church, and the demands of real ecumenism, which is based on the true integration of each person into his own church. In your contacts with the Holy See, you can receive useful

guidance from the Pontifical Council for the Laity. In the same way you are aware that it is necessary to cooperate with other religious and secular associations which work in the same field. And you make it your concern to participate in the activities of the Church, particularly in your parishes, in diocesan or national pilgrimages. For it is important that the persons with disabilities and their friends be integrated as much as possible into the entire Body of the Church, where they ought to have their full place.

### **To LISTEN TO GOD**

Whenever you come to assess difficulties, hopes and projects of your movement, you place yourselves in a position to listen to God and ask him to continue this work of his, according to his wishes. I am very conscious of this fundamental availability and I want you to keep and develop it. The present time of Jubilee allows us to enter more deeply into the will of the Lord; by rediscovering the love of God, which is holy, near and faithful: by purifying our consciences, our behaviour and our desires: by meditating on the mysterious value of redemptive suffering, as I recently proposed to the world: in asking the risen Jesus to free our hearts from all that hinders them, so that we might know the joy of the children of God.

May the Holy Spirit enlighten and strengthen all the members of Faith and Light communities across the world. May he inspire and sustain those with responsibility, may the Virgin of the Annunciation, with her simple and open heart, help them welcome the poor, who are people with disabilities.

And as for myself, I encourage you with my loving Apostolic Blessing.

## Letter from JOHN-PAUL II

### to the Faith and Light's pilgrims in Lourdes for Easter 1991



To my sons and daughters in the Faith and Light Movement,

Today your third international pilgrimage is gathering at Lourdes, the town where, more than a century ago, the Virgin Mary chose to reveal herself to a young girl, one of the poor, who had no apparent reason to expect such a marvellous encounter. I want you to know that I am praying with you, and that you have a very special place in my heart, and even more so in the heart of God.

Indeed, the power and greatness of God reveal themselves in the persons with disabilities. What is the meaning of the word "handicap"? It means the weight which has to be carried by the strongest in a race in order to give the weakest an equal chance. Looking at the word in this way gives us an entirely new perspective: in carrying as they do a real weight, people with a

handicap become, in their simplicity, an especially pure reflexion of the beauty of God, His life and His love. What is madness in the eyes of men is true wisdom for the Father in Heaven.

The world has still to discover all the treasures which God has hidden in the hearts of those who suffer on the level of their intelligence: through these people, God offers Himself to be seen and loved. He also wants to give Himself to them : this is why we need to know how to discover their capacity for spiritual openness and how to help them grow and develop as Christians. God, their Creator, recognizes Himself in them; in them He loves what he Himself gave form to: the image and likeness of His Son. One of the vocations of your movement is to foster an ever greater respect for this presence of God in each person who has a handicap.

With all the trials and joys that come with it, the parents, families, educators and friends of people with a handicap have received a mission to guide, support, protect and help them advance on their path of darkness and light. In encouraging them to persevere on this path, my desire is that they may find, in their parishes and in other groups they are part of, the welcome and support they have the right to expect. The whole of society must, as sometimes it already has, undergo a change of attitude, remembering how it will be judged on the basis of the value it gives to its weakest members. The person with a handicap must be able to feel that he or she is never either alone or useless.

The Easter message is one of faith and light. The Risen Lord is asking us to be open to his New Life, which fills all of creation with radiant light, enabling us to proclaim with the psalmist : “With you is the fountain of life, and by your light we are enlightened” (Ps 35,10).

Dear friends, from the shores of the Tibre to the Gave of Lourdes, a bond that is invisible but very real unites us in thought and prayer. I tell you once again that I am with you during this pilgrimage.

With all my affection, I invoke upon you, upon all those who accompany you and all those who were unable to come, the strength of the Spirit of unity and peace and, in confiding you to the maternal tenderness of Our Lady of Lourdes, I grant you with all my heart my Apostolic Blessing.

*From the Vatican, 16 March 1991*





***Live in harmony with one another  
...love as brothers,  
be compassionate...  
You were called so that  
you may inherit a blessing.”***

(See 1 Peter 3:8-9)

*Joannes Paulus PP. II*

*These words from Saint Peter were chosen by the Holy Father and signed in his hand for the Faith and Light pilgrims gathered at Lourdes for Easter 91.*

## Letter from JOHN PAUL II

### to the Faith and Light pilgrims Lourdes, Easter 2001



**T**o my sons  
and daughters  
of the Faith and Light movement,

In this Holy Week of the first year of the new millennium, joining you through love and prayer, I greet you, you who have come to the Grotto of Massabielle on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the foundation of your movement. Mary herself welcomes you here to revive your desire to come and drink at the source, to lead you to meet her Son, as she did before with Bernadette.

At Lourdes, the love that Jesus and Mary have for the weakest bursts forth with remarkable strength, by inviting you to give thanks for the wonders that God performs within you.

I encourage you to revive and consolidate your faith, so as to be a missionary every day.

**Those of you who have a disability**, you are the heart of the great Faith and Light family. Your life is a gift from God and makes you witnesses of the true life. And if the disability sometimes leads you to difficult struggles in your existence, you often live, in the words of Claudel, with “uplifted souls in shackled bodies...”. Dear friends, you are

a precious treasure for the Church, who is also your family, and you have a special place in Jesus' heart.

**For thirty years**, with daring, courage and perseverance, Faith and Light has not ceased to remind us of the remarkable dignity of every human being. We can give thanks for the hope and trust that so many people, so many families, have found in the movement. I wish to warmly thank those people around the disabled for the irreplaceable work carried out every day in the service of those who have been forgotten by our societies and, above all, for the joy they bring to them. In this way, they are witnesses to how the joy of living is a hidden spring, whose source lies in trusting God and Mary, his Mother. I would particularly like to salute Jean Vanier and Marie-Hélène Mathieu, for their long-standing exertions on behalf of the life and support of the persons with disabilities.

Dear brothers and sisters, **your presence at Lourdes** is also a call aimed at Christians and the officials of our society, so that they may have an even better understanding that a disability, if it requires assistance, is above all an invitation to overcome all forms of egoism and to get involved in new brotherhoods and new solidarities. As I was reminding you in Rome, on their jubilee, the persons with disabilities call “into question the ideas of life linked only to personal satisfaction, appearance and efficiency” (Homily, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2000, No.5). They call upon all members of society to give moral and material support to the parents responsible for children with disabilities. When there is an increasing tendency to terminate before birth the human being who is likely to have a disability, the activity of Faith and Light constitutes a prophetic sign in favour of life and priority attention given to the weakest members of society.

**Through your great diversity**, coming from seventy-five countries, you are living in a truly ecumenical dimension. The presence at Lourdes of Christians gathered together from different denominations – Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant – attests, from a conviction founded on the common faith in the risen Christ, that each person is a gift from God, with dignity and inalienable rights, and that, in spite of disability, it is possible to live happily.

**With all my love**, I invoke upon you, upon those who accompany you and upon those who were unable to come, the strength of the Risen Lord, in order that he may give to each person the courage and joy to continue the mission of witnessing the love of God in our world.

May you be able, following the example of Bernadette, to welcome and make the Good News bear ever more fruit, of which our humanity has so much need!

By entrusting you to the maternal kindness of Our Lady of Lourdes, I willingly grant you the Apostolic Blessing.

*From the Vatican, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2001*



## **Speech of JEAN-PAUL II**

**address  
to the delegates  
of the international  
meeting  
Caste Gandolfo  
26 September 2002**

**D**ear Friends,  
I am particularly happy to welcome you, you who represent the international Association Faith and Light, and I greet in a special way Marie-Hélène Mathieu and Jean Vanier, its founders.

Born in Lourdes, your movement has received a great deal from the grace of this special place, where the sick and the people with disabilities are given first place. By welcoming all these “little ones” with an intellectual disability, you have seen in them special witnesses of God’s tenderness, from whom we have a lot to learn and who have a specific place in the Church. In fact, their participation in the ecclesial community paves the way for simple and fraternal relationships, and their filial and spontaneous prayer invites each one of us to turn towards our Heavenly Father.

My thoughts also go to their parents who, thanks to you, feel supported in their suffering and who see their distress transformed into hope, in order to welcome in humanity

and in faith their handicapped children. They discover the road of conversion that the Gospel opens to men and women : with the Cross, expression of the “greatest love” of the Lord for his friends, each one receives the power to participate in the life of God, which is love.

I would like to give thanks once again for your witness in our society, called to discover, in an ever greater way, the dignity of people with disabilities; welcoming them and enabling them to participate in society, even if there is a long way to go for the dignity of every human to be respected, and for the gift of life never to be undermined, especially where the lives of children with disabilities are concerned. You are working on it with generosity and competence. I also appreciate the courage of families and associations who take care of the persons with disabilities, they remind us of the meaning and value of human existence.

Dear friends, as I entrust your session to Our Lady, I wish that your work may bear fruit, so that the strength of your commitment to such a beautiful and noble cause may be renewed. To each one of you, and to all of those whom you represent, I warmly impart a special Apostolic blessing.

**Message from BENEDICTO XVI**  
**to the leaders**  
**International meeting**  
**Lourdes 2008**



**W**hen informed of the international meeting of the *Faith and Light* movement which is currently taking place at Lourdes, with the theme “*In the wake of the Spirit*” , Pope Benedict XVI asked me to assure all the participants that he is with them in spirit, and would like to encourage them at this time when coordinators and national chaplains from five continents are faced with the task of adopting a new Constitution.

The Holy Spirit, given at Pentecost, shapes the heart of the Ecclesiastical Community so that it may be a witness of the love of the Father, who through his Son, wants to make humanity a single family in the world. All have their place. The Pope is delighted that, through the movement, many families stand united to help each other and together provide an example of the infinite value of all human life,

even the most fragile. May each one of you always be guided and supported by the conviction that Christ's disciples must, in their mission, express a love that they will first have drawn from the heart of the Saviour. This is how, through the gift of the Spirit, the weak can say "I am strong" (cf. Joel 3.10).

To all those gathered together, as well as to the members of *Faith and Light* and all the people who, through their commitment, enable this movement to develop its activities, we commend you to Our Lady of Lourdes and the Holy Father bestows a warm apostolic blessing upon all of you.

Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone  
*Secretary of State to His Holiness*

*Paris, 13 October 2008*



**Message  
from  
BENEDICT XVI**

**to the movement  
on its  
40<sup>th</sup> anniversary**



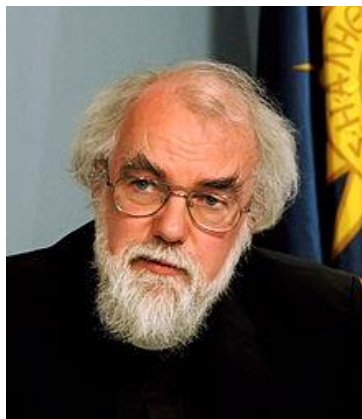
**O**n the occasion of the celebrations to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the international Movement *Faith and Light*, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI sends his warmest wishes to the Council of Coordinators and to all the members of the Movement, assuring them of his prayer that God may make the work, which began with the Easter 1971 pilgrimage to Lourdes, flourish. Since then, many *Faith and Light* communities have grown throughout the world. May they repeat to the heart of each disabled person the words of Pope Paul VI: “*You are loved by God just as you are*” and help them to continue their pilgrimage in life with peace and joy within, surrounded by brothers and sisters who are happy to share with them the love that God brings in this blessed way to the smallest and weakest! May the celebration of this anniversary be a joyful message of hope for the persons with disabilities, for their families and their friends! His Holiness wholeheartedly sends all members of the international Movement *Faith and Light* an affectionate Apostolic Blessing.

Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone  
*Secretary of State to His Holiness*

*Paris, 20 January 2011*

**Message from  
ROWAN WILLIAMS  
Archbishop  
of Canterbury**

**to mark the 40<sup>th</sup>  
anniversary  
of Faith and Light**



It gives me real joy to write to you, and through you, to the whole family of Faith and Light, a word of congratulation and encouragement on your fortieth anniversary. It has been forty years of extraordinary transformations so many lives touched, so many hearts kindled.

You began your life in pilgrimage to Lourdes in 1971 and fittingly you have chosen to celebrate your birthday with pilgrimage. As you give thanks to God for the great blessings of the last forty years, I give thanks to God for your witness to the infinite and unimaginable love of God has for each one of us. I hope and pray that Faith and Light will continue its pilgrimage towards God's Kingdom and shine a light on the Way, the Truth and the Life that is promised for all, by and in, Jesus our true guide.

To all of you, I wish a happy anniversary and a joyful journey towards the future.

*8 June 2011*



## **Message from RUTH PATTERSON**

**Minister in the Presbyterian Church  
of Ireland. Delegate of the  
Fellowship of the Churches members  
of the World Council of Churches  
for Faith and Light**

**to mark the  
40<sup>th</sup> anniversary  
of Faith and Light**

**D**ear Faith and Light Pilgrims,  
I write from Ireland to wish you joy in your 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. Faith and Light continues to be an enormous source of hope, encouragement and inspiration world wide. To be a pilgrim implies being on the way towards a special place, a holy place.

I know you are travelling to many holy places around the world and I pray that these pilgrimages will be special times of joy and sharing for you. But, at another level, as you journey together over the next months and years, may you experience a deeper place of communion and belovedness with God and with each other.

Travel well, in peace and with joy.

*May 2011*

## **Message from POPE FRANCIS**

### **to the delegates International meeting, Leeds (United Kingdom) 2013**



**H**is Holiness Pope Francis was pleased to be informed of the International meeting and General assembly of Faith and Light that is taking place in Leeds from 20 to 27 July 2013, and he sends warm greetings to all who are taking part.

The Holy Father gives thanks to God for the beautiful witness of Faith and Light. Through faith, you know that by holding out the hand of friendship to a suffering or person with disabilities, you are befriending Christ himself. And the moment you recognize the face of Christ, even in the least of his brothers and sisters, your eyes are opened to see the glorious light that streams from his face, changing all who gaze upon him into his own likeness, from on degree of glory to another (cf 2 Cor 3:18). His Holiness prays that the joy

you bring to one another through the friendship that you share may shine brightly for all to see, so that the too may come to recognize the beauty of Christ's face and learn to place all their trust in him.

With these sentiments, the Holy Father invokes upon all the participants in the General assembly the peace and joy of our Lord Jesus Christ and he cordially imparts his Apostolic Blessing.

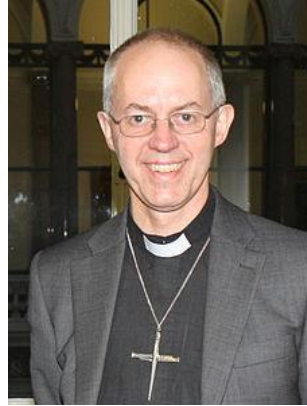
Your sincerely in Christ.

Angelo Becciu  
*Substitute*

*18 June 2013*

## **Message from Most Reverend JUSTIN WELBY**

### **Archbishop of Canterbury to the delegates International meeting, Leeds (United Kingdom) 2013**



It is my great joy to send greetings to you all as you are gathered in Leeds for your 16<sup>th</sup> International Meeting. I am delighted that this country has the blessing of hosting you for your gathering.

Faith and Light communities offer a sign of God's kingdom. Your coming together as persons with intellectual disability and with your families and friends to share friendship and fellowship shows the power of Christ's love in action.

The theme chosen for your meeting "*Called to bear fruit*" reminds us that this love is to be taken out and shared with whoever we meet, so that the blessings we receive may also bear fruit in the lives of others.

I thank you as movement for all you do towards building up the unity of God's Church.

I am delighted that Bishop Patrick Rooke, Bishop of Tuam, Killala and Achorn in the Church of Ireland, is partici-

pating on behalf of the Anglican Communion and willing to take forward the Communion's official representation for which I have been so grateful to Bishop John Packer for carrying until now. I thank you as a movement for all you do towards building up the unity of God's Church

My prayers and best wishes to you all.

The Most Reverend and Right Honourable  
Justin Welby

*19 July 2013*



## **Message from RUTH PATTERSON**

**to the delegates  
international meeting,  
Leeds  
(United Kingdom)  
2013**

**W**hen I think of my association with Faith and Light over the years, what I remember especially are the faces of so many people – each one with a unique story – as all of you will have who are gathered for the international meeting in Leeds. One of those faces is that of Father Joseph Larsen who was International Chaplain some years ago\*. Many of you may remember him. Today I received a letter from him. He is living in a home for elderly priests in Holland. He says: “L’Arche and Faith and Light are about the preciousness of every human being. In my own humble way I try to make this mission heard in my own community of elderly people. We are all of us people with special handicaps and idiosyncracies. In my old age (88 years) my spirituality approaches that of the heart of the people in Faith and Light – learning how to be loved by the spirit of charity surrounding us. You may know that I have many of the symptoms of Parkinson’s disease. They make me helpless

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Father Joseph joined the Father on August 22, 2013.



at certain moments. My dear confreres never tire in coming to my aid. It often makes me feel ashamed to have to rely on them, but the need loses its sting through the warm love in which it is wrapped. I am learning to be helpless with a smile.”

Perhaps that is a lesson that the whole world needs to learn, especially those who are in positions of power and control – being helpless with a smile. You in Faith and Light, because you daily live such a reality, and because you are learning what it means to be the beloved, have this message of hope for the world.

May you experience much joy in your continuing pilgrimage, may you always hold in your hearts the conviction that unity is diversity embraced by love, and at Leeds may you find food for the journey and wine for rejoicing.

*July 2013*

## **Message from POPE FRANCIS to the delegates International meeting, Fatqa (Lebanon) 2018**

To His Excellency Monsignor Michel Aoun  
Bishop of Jbeil, Catholic Church delegate to Faith and Light

**O**n the occasion of the International Meeting of Faith and Light, His Holiness Pope Francis joins with you, the Catholic Church delegate to this Association, as well as with all the participants from all over the world, for this event. He asks the Lord to bless the commitment of Faith and Light, which contributes to the strengthening of the bonds of solidarity in the world, especially in favour of our brothers and sisters who need the most support!



May men let themselves be guided by Christ, the true light of the world, so that the love of God enlightens hearts! Wishing you every success, the Holy Father sends his heartfelt Apostolic Blessing to all the members of Faith and Light, to yourself and to all those taking part in the meeting.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin  
Secretary of State for His Holiness

## Message from Pope Francis to Faith and Light for its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary

*Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. (Col 3, 14-15)*

On the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the international movement “Faith and Light”, Pope Francis sends his cordial and paternal greetings, expressing his profound joy at the generous activity that you are doing in support of people with intellectual disabilities, their families and their friends.

The Holy Father hopes that this important anniversary will generate ever more renewed attention to this laudable activity and will be the opportunity for an ever more generous commitment of love for life and for those who are experiencing situations of great difficulty.

The Holy Father, on the occasion of the holy celebrations of Easter, invokes abundant gifts from heaven for all those who take part in the celebrations of this event. May it be an opportunity for graces and genuine evangelical testimony.

The Holy Father wholeheartedly gives his apostolic blessing to all community members and their families as well as the entire movement.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State for his Holiness

*From the Vatican, 30 March 2021*

## **Speech of Pope Francis to Faith and Light on its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary Private audience, 2 October 2021**



Dear brothers and sisters, hello!

I welcome you and thank Mr Raul Izquierdo Garcia, your International Coordinator, for his introductory words. You are celebrating your Jubilee: it is a great opportunity to give thanks, to recognise the gifts that the Lord has given you throughout the years of this journey and to express your gratitude. And at the same time, this Jubilee also becomes an opportunity to look to the future, to the task that the Holy Spirit still entrusts to you with the fruits that the Church still awaits from Faith and Light, because of the vocation and mission received from the Lord.

Fifty years have gone by since that pilgrimage to Lourdes at Easter 1971, to which people with intellectual disabilities, their families and many friends were invited.

From that moment, beneath the loving gaze of Mary, the Faith and Light experiment began: the Holy Spirit proposed the birth of something that no-one had anticipated, that is to say, your communities where you celebrate joy, reconciliation and reciprocal communion. Thus, the light and the strength of the risen Lord has given Hope to many people who felt excluded and rejected, sometimes in the Church too.

From that moment, the Holy Spirit accompanied the journey of your Movement and many “Faith and Light” communities were born in many countries on the five continents, carrying a message of love and welcome. This message is the heart of the Gospel! It reminds us that any person, even and especially the smallest and frailest, is loved by God and has their place in the Church and in the world. It is “the Gospel of smallness”, as St Paul reminds us when he writes to the Corinthians: “Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God” (I Co 1, 26-29).

The presence of Faith and Light has been and is a prophecy because the most fragile people are often rejected and regarded as useless. And your prophecy is even more important today, to fight the culture of rejection and to remind everyone that diversity is an asset and must never become grounds for exclusion and discrimination.

We can look at these fifty years of Faith and Light as a great pilgrimage, as an ideal continuation of the first pilgrimage. And it is also an ecumenical journey because people from different Christian denominations meet in your communities: Catholics, Protestants, Anglicans, Orthodox... A sign of communion, a tangible seed of unity. It is precisely the most fragile people who become a source of reconciliation because they call us all to a path of conversion.

The road that you have taken is long and full of fruits but still today in the Church and the world, there are many who, in smallness and fragility, are forgotten and excluded. This is why I encourage you to continue your welcoming presence with the power of the Holy Spirit: may your communities always be places of meeting, of human advancement and celebration for all those who still feel marginalised and abandoned. For the families who are experiencing the birth of a child with disabilities, may you be a sign of hope so that no-one shuts themselves away in sadness and despair.

Within Christian communities, I invite you to have a leaven gospel way of doing things: do not isolate or shut yourself away but take part in Church life in the parishes and districts, bring your experience and bear witness to the choice of God for the last, the small and the excluded. May the spirit of communion and friendship that is part of your charisma, always make you instruments of reconciliation and peace, especially where there are conflicts and divisions.

The emblem that represents your experience, your “logo” is a boat on a rough sea whilst the sun rises above the clouds after the storm.

During this pandemic, I have remembered several times, thinking about the Gospel story of the disciples in the storm, that we are all in the same boat; and I therefore confirm you in your commitment: to be, in the storms that the people and their families experience, a small boat on which everyone can find a place, in the certainty that the Lord Jesus is on this boat. May the sun of faith and hope that rises above the clouds of our fears and insecurities accompany you always on the journey that still awaits you. May the Lord bless you and the Virgin Mary watch over you. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!



