

**PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF
MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE**

THE SHRINE

Memory, Presence and Prophecy of the Living God

INTRODUCTION

1. The meaning and aim of the document

“All Christians are invited to become part of the great pilgrimage that Christ, the Church and mankind have made and must continue to make in history. The shrine which is the goal of that pilgrimage is to become ‘the Tent of Meeting’, as the Bible calls the tabernacle of the covenant.” (1) These words invite us to consider the relationship between the notion of pilgrimage (2) and that of the shrine, which is usually the visible goal of the pilgrim’s journey: “The term ‘shrine’ designates a church or other sacred place to which the faithful make pilgrimages for a particular religious reason, with the approval of the local Ordinary.” (3) In shrines, a meeting with the living God can take place through the life-giving experience of the *Mystery* which is proclaimed, celebrated and lived: “At shrines, the means of salvation are to be provided more abundantly to the faithful; the word of God is to be carefully proclaimed; liturgical life is to be appropriately fostered, especially through the celebration of the Eucharist and penance; and approved forms of popular devotion are to be cultivated.” (4) “Shrines are thus like milestones that guide the journey of the children of God on earth” (5); they foster the experience of gathering and encounter, and the building up of the ecclesial community.

These characteristics apply in a unique way to the shrines that have sprung up in the Holy Land, in the places sanctified by the presence of the Word Incarnate, and they can be seen particularly in the places consecrated by the martyrdom of the Apostles and all those who bore witness to the faith by shedding their blood. One can also find the entire history of the pilgrim Church reflected in countless shrines, “permanent witnesses of the Good News” (6), linked to the decisive events of the evangelization or the faith-life of different peoples and communities. Every shrine can be seen as the bearer of a specific message, since it vividly makes present today the foundational event of the past which still speaks to the heart of pilgrims. Marian shrines in particular provide an authentic school of faith based on Mary’s example and motherly intercession. Today too, by their witness to the manifold richness of God’s saving activity, all shrines are an inestimable gift of grace to his Church.

A reflection on the nature and purpose of shrines can thus be an effective aid in receiving and living out the great gift of reconciliation and new life that the Church continually offers to all the disciples of the Redeemer and, through them, to the whole human family. This then is the underlying *meaning and aim* of the present document; it wishes to consider the flowering of the spiritual life that takes place at shrines, the pastoral activity of those who minister in them, and their effects on the life of the local Churches.

The following reflection is only a modest aid towards a greater appreciation of the service that shrines render to the life of the Church.

2. Listening to God's revelation

If reflection on shrines is to nourish faith and prove fruitful for pastoral activity, it needs to be rooted in an *obedient listening to revelation*, which richly presents the message and the power of salvation contained in the “mystery of the Temple”.

In the language of the Bible, and especially of Saint Paul, the term “mystery” refers to God’s plan of salvation unfolding in human history. When we contemplate the “mystery of the Temple” in attentive listening to the Word of God, we can glimpse, beyond the visible events of history, the presence of the divine “glory” (cf. *Ps* 29:9): the manifestation of the God who is thrice-Holy (cf. *Is* 6:3), his presence in dialogue with mankind (cf. *I Kg* 8:30-53), his entry into time and space, his planting his “tent” in our midst (cf. *Jn* 1:14). The outline of a theology of the temple thus emerges, in the light of which we can better understand the significance of the shrine.

This theology is characterized by a growing concentration upon certain focal points: in the first place, the figure of the “cosmic temple”, evoked for example by Psalm 19 with its the image of the “two suns”, the sun of the Torah - or of the revelation explicitly addressed to Israel (vv. 7-14) - and the sun in the heavens which “declare the glory of God” (vv. 1-6) in a revelation that is silent yet universal, effective and directed to all. Within this temple the divine presence is everywhere felt (cf. *Ps* 139) and a liturgy of ecstatic praise is celebrated, as Psalm 148 makes clear, since together with the creatures of heaven, it mentions a universal “*alleluia*” intoned by 22 earthly creatures - as many as the letters of the Hebrew alphabet - thus signifying the whole of creation.

Then there is the temple of Jerusalem, where the Ark of the Covenant was kept, the holy place par excellence of the Jewish faith and the permanent memorial of the God of history, who established a covenant with His people and remains ever faithful to it. The temple is the visible house of the Eternal One (*Ps* 11:4), filled by the cloud of His presence (cf. *I Kg* 8:10.13) and the dwelling-place of His “glory” (cf. *I Kg* 8:11).

Finally, there is the new and definitive temple which is the eternal Son, who came in the flesh (cf. *Jn* 1:14), the Lord Jesus, crucified and risen (cf. *Jn* 2:19-21), who makes of those who believe in Him a temple built of living stones, which is the pilgrim Church in time: “He is the living stone, rejected by human beings but chosen by God and precious to him; come to him so that you, too, may be living stones making a spiritual house as a holy priesthood to offer the spiritual sacrifices made acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (*I Pet* 2:4-5) By drawing close to the One who is the “living stone”, we construct the spiritual building of the new and perfect covenant. We also prepare for the feast of the Kingdom that is “not yet” fully realized, thanks to our spiritual sacrifices (cf. *Rom* 12:1-2), which are pleasing to God precisely because they are offered in Christ, through Him and with Him, the Covenant in person. The Church thus appears above all as “the holy temple, visibly represented in the shrines of stone.” (7)

3. The supporting arches

In the light of these scriptural testimonies, we can come to a deeper understanding of the “mystery of the Temple” in three ways, which correspond to the three dimensions of time and

which serve as the *supporting arches* of a theology of the shrine, namely, memory, presence and prophecy of the God who is with us.

In relation to the unique and definitive *past* of the event of our salvation, the shrine appears as a memory of our origin with the Lord of heaven and earth. In relation to the *present* of the community of the redeemed, gathered in the time between the first and the final coming of the Lord, the shrine appears as a sign of the divine *Presence*, the place of the covenant, where the community of the covenant constantly expresses and renews itself. In relation to the *future* fulfillment of the promise of God, that “not yet” which is the object of our greatest hope, the shrine is set as a *prophecy* of God’s tomorrow in the today of the present world.

Each of these three dimensions can inspire the outlines of a pastoral plan for shrines, one capable of translating into personal and ecclesial life the symbolic meaning of the temple, where the Christian community assembles, called together by the Bishop and the priests who are his co-workers.

I. THE SHRINE, A MEMORY OF ORIGINS

4. Memory of God’s work

A shrine is first of all a place of memory, the memory of God’s powerful activity in history, which is the origin of the People of the Covenant and the faith of each believer.

The Patriarchs had already commemorated their encounters with God by building an altar or a memorial (cf. *Gn* 12:6-8; 13:18; 33:18-20), to which they would return as a sign of fidelity (cf. *Gn* 13:4; 46:1), and Jacob considered the place where his vision took place as a “dwelling-place of God” (cf. *Gn* 28:11-22). In the Biblical tradition, the shrine is not merely the work of human hands, filled with cosmological or anthropological symbolism, but a witness to God’s initiative in revealing himself to human persons and making his covenant of salvation with them. The deepest meaning of every shrine is to serve as a reminder in faith of the salvific work of the Lord. (8)

In a spiritual climate of adoration, invocation and praise, Israel knew that it was her God who freely desired the Temple, not human presumption. An exemplary witness to this is the splendid prayer of Solomon, born precisely of his powerful awareness of the reality of the temptation of idolatry: “Yet will God really live with human beings on earth? Why, the heavens, the highest of the heavens cannot contain you. How much less this temple built by me! Even so, listen favorably to the prayer and entreaty of your servant, Lord, my God; listen to the cry and to the prayer which your servant makes to you today: day and night may your eyes watch over this temple, over this place of which you have said, ‘My name will be there.’ Listen to the prayer which your servant offers in this place.” (*1 Kg* 8:27-29)

The shrine, then, was not built because Israel wanted to capture the presence of the Eternal, but just the opposite, because the living God, who entered history, who journeyed with his people in the cloud by day and in the fire by night (cf. *Ex* 13:21), wanted to give a sign of his fidelity and his continual active presence in the midst of His people. Thus the Temple would not be a house

built by human hands, but a place that would proclaim the initiative of the One who alone builds the house. This is the simple yet grand truth expressed in the words spoken to the prophet Nathan: Go and tell my servant David, ‘The Lord says this: Are you to build me a temple for me to live in? ... The Lord furthermore tells you that he will make of you a dynasty. And when your days are over and you fall asleep with your ancestors, I shall appoint your heir, your own son to succeed you and I shall make his sovereignty secure. He will build a temple for my name and I shall make his royal throne secure forever. I shall be a father to him and he a son to me.’” (2 *Sam* 7:5.11-14)

The shrine thus becomes a sort of living *memorial* of the origin from on high of the chosen and beloved People of the Covenant. It is a permanent reminder of the fact that God’s people is born not of flesh or blood (cf. *Jn* 1:13), but that the life of faith is born of the wondrous initiative of God, who entered history to unite us to himself and to change our hearts and our lives. The shrine is the efficacious *memorial* of God’s work, the visible sign proclaiming to all generations how great is his love and testifying that he first loved us (cf. 1 *Jn* 4:19) and wishes to be the Lord and Saviour of His people. As Gregory of Nyssa said in reference to the shrines of the Holy Land, in every shrine one can recognize “traces of the great goodness of the Lord for us”, “the salvific signs of God who gave us life” (9), “the memories of the mercy of the Lord in our regard”. (10)

5. An initiative “from above”

What the Temple of Jerusalem signified in the Old Testament finds its highest fulfillment in the New Testament, in the mission of the Son of God. He himself becomes the new Temple, the dwelling of the Eternal One among us, the Covenant in person. The episode of the expulsion of the vendors from the temple (cf. *Mt* 21:12-13) declares that the sacred space, on the one hand, has been extended to all peoples, as we see from a detail of great symbolical value, namely, that the veil of the temple was “torn in two from top to bottom.” (*Mk* 15:38) On the other hand, the sacred space is concentrated in the person of the One who – victorious over death (cf. 2 *Tim* 1:10) – comes to be the sacrament of the encounter with God for everyone.

To the religious leaders, Jesus said: “Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” Citing their reply – “It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple: are you going to raise it up again in three days?” – John the Evangelist comments: “But he was speaking of the Temple that was his body, and when Jesus rose from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and what he had said.” (*Jn* 2:19-22)

In the economy of the new Covenant too, the Temple is the sign of the initiative of God’s love in history: Christ, the one sent by the Father, God made man for us, the eternal high priest (cf. *Heb* 7), is the new Temple, the awaited and promised Temple, the sanctuary of the new and eternal Covenant (cf. *Heb* 8). Both in the Old and in the New Testament, therefore, the shrine is a living memorial of the origin, of the initiative by which God loved us first (1 *Jn* 4:19). Whenever Israel looked at the Temple with the eyes of faith, whenever Christians look in the same way at Christ, the new Temple, and at the shrines that, from the edict of Constantine on, they have built as a sign of the living Christ among us, they recognize in this sign the initiative of the love of the living God for mankind. (11)

The shrine thus testifies that God is greater than our heart, that He has always loved us and has given us His Son and the Holy Spirit because He wants to dwell in us, making us his temple and making our bodies the shrine of the Holy Spirit. As St. Paul says: “Do you not realize that you are a temple of God with the Spirit of God living in you? If anybody should destroy the temple of God, God will destroy that person, because God’s temple is holy; and you are that temple.” (*1 Cor 3:16-17*; cf. *6:19*) “The temple of God is what we are the temple of the living God, as he himself has said: *I shall fix my home among them and live among them; I will be their God and they will be my people.* (*2 Cor 6:16*)

The shrine is the place where the love of God, who has planted His tent among us (cf. *Jn 1:14*), is constantly made present. Therefore, as St. Augustine says, in the holy place “there is no succession of days as if each day were to come and then go. The beginning of one does not mark the end of the other, because there all of them will be present at one and the same time. The life to which those days belong will know no setting.” (12) Thus, in ever new ways, the shrine resounds with the joyful proclamation that “God loved us first and gave us the capacity to love him.... He did not love us in order to leave us as ugly as we were, but to transform us and make us beautiful.... How shall we be beautiful? By loving Him, who is ever beautiful. In the measure that love grows in you, in the same measure will your beauty grow; for charity is truly the beauty of the soul.” (13) A shrine thus constantly reminds us that new life is not born “from below” by purely human initiative, and that the Church is not simply a product of flesh and blood (cf. *Jn 1:13*), but rather that the life of the redeemed and the ecclesial communion in which that life finds expression are born “from above” (cf. *Jn 3:3*), from the gratuitous and amazing initiative of Trinitarian love that is prior to all human love (cf. *1 Jn 4:9-10*).

6. Awe and adoration

What are the consequences for our Christian life of this first and fundamental message that the shrine transmits, insofar as it is a *memory* of our origin in the Lord?

We can speak of three fundamental approaches.

In the first place, the shrine reminds us that the Church is born of God’s initiative, an initiative that the piety of the faithful and the public approval of the Church acknowledge in the foundational event at the origin of every shrine. Thus, in everything associated with the shrine and in everything that finds expression in it, we need to discern the presence of the mystery, the activity of God in time, the manifestation of his efficacious presence, hidden under the signs of history. This conviction is further expressed in the shrine through the specific message connected with it, whether in regard to the mysteries of the life of Jesus Christ, in regard to one of the titles of Mary, “who shines forth to the whole community of the elect as a model of the virtues,” (14) or in regard to the individual Saints whose memory proclaims the “wonderful works of Christ in his servants.” (15)

One approaches the mystery with an attitude of *awe* and *adoration*, with a sense of *wonder* before the gift of God; for this reason, one enters a shrine with a spirit of adoration. Anyone who is incapable of experiencing wonder at the work of God, who does not perceive the newness of what God brings about through his loving initiative, will not be capable of perceiving the

profound significance and beauty of the mystery of the Temple, which is disclosed in the shrine. The proper respect shown to a holy place expresses the awareness that, in seeing what God has done, we need to respond not with a human logic, which presumes to define everything on the basis of what is seen and produced, but with an attitude of veneration, filled with awe and a sense of mystery.

Surely, an adequate *preparation* is needed for an encounter with a shrine, so that we can perceive beyond its visible, artistic and folkloric aspects the gracious work of God evoked by various signs, such as apparitions, miracles, the foundational events that represent the real first beginnings of every shrine as a place of faith.

This preparation will take place, first of all, during the stops in the journey that leads the pilgrim to the shrine; such was the case for the pilgrims to Zion who prepared themselves for the great meeting with the Shrine of God by singing the Psalms of Ascent (*Pss* 120-134), which are a true liturgical catechesis on the conditions, nature and effects of an encounter with the mystery of the Temple.

The topographical arrangement of the shrine and its individual areas, the respectful behavior that is required of every ordinary visitor, the attentive hearing of the word of God, prayer and the celebration of the sacraments will prove of immense help in enabling people to understand the spiritual significance of their experience there. All these actions together can express the spirit of welcome radiated by the shrine, which is open to everyone and, in particular, to the many people who in the loneliness of a secularized and desacralized world perceive deep in their hearts a yearning for and an attraction to holiness. (16)

7. *Thanksgiving*

In the second place, a shrine recalls God's initiative and makes us understand that that initiative, the fruit of a pure gift, must be received in the spirit of *thanksgiving*.

One enters a shrine above all to give thanks, conscious that God loved us even before we were capable of loving him; to express our praise of the Lord for his marvelous works (cf. *Ps* 136); to ask his forgiveness for the sins we have committed; and to implore the gift of fidelity in our life as believers and the help needed as we make our earthly pilgrimage.

In this sense, shrines represent an extraordinary school of prayer, where the persevering and trusting attitude of the humble testifies in a special way to their faith in the Lord's promise: "Ask and it shall be given to you." (*Mt* 7:7) (17)

To recognize the shrine as a *memory* of God's initiative is thus to learn the art of thanksgiving, to foster in our hearts a spirit of reconciliation, contemplation and peace. A shrine reminds us that joy in life is first of all the effect of the presence of the Holy Spirit who also awakens in us the praise of God. The more we are enabled to praise the Lord and make our life a continuous act of thanksgiving to the Father (cf. *Rom* 12:1) in union with the one and perfect thanksgiving of Christ the Priest, in particular through the celebration of the Eucharist, the more will we welcome God's gift within us and allow it to bear fruit.

From this standpoint, the Virgin Mary is “a most excellent model”. (18) In the spirit of thanksgiving, she let herself be overshadowed by the Spirit (cf. *Lk* 1:35), so that in her the Word of God might be conceived and given to mankind. In gazing upon her, we understand that a shrine is a place where the gift from on high is welcomed, the dwelling in which, even as we give thanks, we allow ourselves to be loved by the Lord, following his example and with his help.

Shrines thus remind us that where there is no gratitude, the gift is lost; where man does not give thanks to the God who each day, even in the hour of trial, loves him ever anew, the gift remains ineffective.

Shrines testify that the vocation of life is not dissipation, frivolity or escape, but praise, peace and joy. A profound understanding of the meaning of a shrine can help us to experience the contemplative dimensions of life, not only inside the shrine itself but everywhere. And since the Sunday Eucharistic celebration is the culmination and source of the whole Christian life, lived as a response of gratitude and self-oblation to the gift from on high, a shrine invites us in a most particular way to rediscover Sunday, “the day of the Lord” and “lord of the days”, (19) the “primordial feast”, “which is meant not only to mark the passage of time, but to reveal its profound meaning”, namely, the glory of God who is all in all. (20)

8. Sharing and commitment

In the third place, as a *memory* of our origin, the shrine shows that this sense of awe and thanksgiving should never be separated from *sharing* with others and a *commitment* to others. The shrine calls to mind the gift of a God who has loved us so much that he pitched his tent among us to bring us salvation, to be our companion in life, one with us in our suffering and in our joy. The founding events of the various shrines also bear witness to this divine solidarity. If God so loved us, so too must we love others (cf. *Jn* 4,12), so that we may be the temple of God by our lives. A shrine is an impetus to solidarity, impelling us to be “living stones” that support one another in the edifice built on the cornerstone which is Christ (*1 Pet* 2:4-5).

It would be fruitless to experience the “time of the shrine” if this does not then draw us to the “time of the road”, the “time of the mission”, and the “time of service”, wherever God manifests himself as love for the weakest and poorest creatures.

The words of Jeremiah, echoed in the teaching of Jesus, remind us that a temple, without faith and without a commitment to justice, is reduced to a “den of thieves” (cf. *Jer* 7:11; *Mt* 21:13). The shrines mentioned by Amos are meaningless unless the Lord is truly sought in them. Liturgy without a life rooted in justice becomes a farce (cf. *Is* 1:10-20; *Am* 5:21-25; *Hos* 6:6). The words of the prophets call the shrine back to its original inspiration, stripping it of empty “sacralism” and idolatry, and making it a seed which bears the fruit of faith and justice in time and space. Then indeed the shrine, as the *memory* of our origin in the Lord, becomes a continuous call to the love of God and to the sharing of gifts received. A visit to the shrine will show its effects above all in a commitment to charitable activities, in work for the advancement of human dignity, justice and peace, values to which the faithful will feel themselves called anew.

II. THE SHRINE, A PLACE OF GOD'S PRESENCE

9. *A place of the Covenant*

The mystery of the shrine does not only call to mind our origin in the Lord; it also reminds us that once God has loved us, he never ceases to love us. In the specific moment of history in which we find ourselves today, faced with all the contradictions and the sufferings of the present, he is with us. The Old and the New Testaments bear unanimous witness that the Temple is not only a place where the saving past is remembered, but also one where grace is even now experienced. A shrine is a *sign of God's Presence*, a place where men's covenant with the Eternal One and with one another is constantly renewed. In journeying to the shrine, the pious Israelite discovered anew God's covenant fidelity to each "today" of history (21).

As they gaze upon the Lord, the new temple whose living presence in the Spirit is evoked by every church building, Christ's followers know that God is always living and present among them and for them. The temple is the holy dwelling of the *Ark of the Covenant*, the place where the covenant with the living God is constantly renewed and the people of God become aware that they are a community of believers, "a chosen race, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation." (*1 Pet 2:9*) As Saint Paul reminds us: "You are no longer aliens or foreign visitors; you are fellow citizens with the holy people of God and part of God's household. You are built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, and Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone. Every structure knit together in him grows into a holy temple in the Lord; and you, too, in him, are being built up into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit." (*Eph 2:19-22*) By dwelling among his people and in their hearts, God himself makes them a living shrine. A shrine built of "dead stones" evokes the One who makes us a shrine of "living stones". (22)

A shrine is a place of the Spirit because it is a place where God's fidelity reaches out and transforms us. People go to a shrine first of all to call upon and to receive the Holy Spirit, in order then to bring this Spirit to all the activities of their lives. In this sense, a shrine appears as a constant reminder of the living presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church, bestowed upon us by the Risen Christ (cf. *Jn 20:22*) to the glory of the Father. A shrine is a visible invitation to drink from the invisible spring of living water (cf. *Jn 4:14*); an invitation which can always be experienced anew, in order to live in fidelity to the covenant with the Eternal One in the Church.

10. *A place of the Word*

The expression "communion of saints", found in the section of the Creed which describes the work of the Holy Spirit, can be seen as a rich evocation of one aspect of the mystery of the Church on her pilgrimage through history. By filling the members of Christ's Body, the Holy Spirit makes the Church the living temple of the Lord, as the Second Vatican Council recalled: "The Church has often been called the building of God (cf. *1 Cor 3:9*).... This building has many names: the house of God (cf. *Tim 3:15*) in which his family dwells; the household of God in the Spirit (cf. *Eph 2:19-22*); the dwelling place of God among men (*Rev 21:3*); and, especially the holy temple. This temple, symbolized by places of worship built of stone, is praised by the holy Fathers and, not without reason, is compared in the Liturgy to the Holy City, the New Jerusalem. As living stones we here on earth are being built up along with this City (cf. *1 Pt 2:5*)."

 (23)

In this holy temple of the Church, the Spirit acts especially through the signs of the new covenant that shrines possess and make available. One of these is the Word of God. The shrine is the *place of the Word* par excellence, in which the Spirit calls us to faith and brings about the “communion of the faithful”. It is extremely important that a shrine be associated with the persistent and receptive hearing of the Word of God, which is no mere human word, but the living God himself present in his Word. The shrine, in which the Word of God resounds, is a place of covenant, where God reminds his people of his faithfulness, in order to shed light on their journey and to offer them consolation and strength.

A shrine can become an excellent place for deepening one’s faith, in a special setting and at a favorable time, apart from the ordinary. It can offer possibilities for a new evangelization, help to foster a popular piety that is “rich in values”, (24) bringing it to a more exact and mature consciousness of faith (25), and it can facilitate the process of enculturation. (26)

Each shrine needs to develop “a suitable catechesis” (27) which, “while it is to take into account the events that are celebrated in the places to be visited and their peculiar nature, should not overlook either the necessary hierarchy in expounding the truths of the faith or its proper place within the liturgical itinerary in which the whole Church participates.” (28)

In this pastoral service of evangelization and catechesis, emphasis should be placed on the specific aspects linked to the memory of each particular shrine, to *its own* particular message, to the “charism” entrusted to it by the Lord and recognized by the Church, and to the heritage of traditions and customs, frequently very rich, that have taken root there.

In the same context of service to evangelization, cultural and artistic initiatives can be sponsored, such as congresses, seminars, exhibitions, reviews, competitions and gatherings on religious themes. “In the past, our shrines were filled with religious mosaics, paintings, and sculptures, to teach the faith. Shall we have enough spiritual strength and genius to create ‘moving images’, of great quality, and adapted to the culture of today? It is a question not only of the first proclamation of the faith in a world that is often very secularized, or of catechesis to deepen this faith, but it is a question of the enculturation of the Gospel Message at the level of each people, of each cultural tradition.” (29)

To this end, a shrine needs the presence of pastoral workers capable of helping people to enter into dialogue with God and to contemplate the immense mystery that enfolds and attracts us. The significance of the ministry of the priests, religious and communities in charge of shrines must be stressed, (30) and consequently the urgent need for them to receive proper training for the service they are called to provide. At the same time, encouragement should be given to lay people trained to carry out the work of catechesis and evangelization associated with the life of the shrine. In this way shrines too will express the wealth of charisms and ministries that the Holy Spirit awakens in the Lord’s Church and pilgrims will benefit from the varied witness given by the different pastoral workers.

11. A place of sacramental encounter

Shrines, as places in which the Spirit speaks also through the specific message which the Church recognizes as associated with each shrine, are also *privileged places for the celebration of the sacraments*. This is especially true for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist, in which the Word is most powerfully present and at work. The sacraments bring about an encounter of the living with the One who constantly preserves them in life and grants them ever new life in the consoling power of the Holy Spirit. They are not rote rituals, but events of salvation, personal encounters with the living God who in the Spirit goes forth to meet all those who come to him hungering and thirsting for his truth and peace. When a sacrament is celebrated in the shrine, therefore, it is not that *something* “is done”, but rather that *someone* is encountered. Indeed, that someone is Christ, who becomes present in the grace of the Spirit in order to give himself to us and to change our life, incorporating us ever more fruitfully into the community of the covenant, the Church.

As a place of encounter with the Lord of life, the shrine as such is a clear sign of the presence of God at work in the midst of his people, for there, through his Word and the sacraments, he gives himself to us. Pilgrims thus approach a shrine as the Temple of the living God, the place of the living covenant with Him, so that the grace of the sacraments may liberate them from sin and grant them the strength to begin again with a new freshness and new joy in their hearts, and thus to become, in the midst of the world, transparent witnesses of the Eternal.

Pilgrims often come to shrines particularly well-disposed to seek the grace of forgiveness; they should be helped to open themselves to the Father “rich in mercy” (*Eph 2:4*) (31), in truth and in freedom, consciously and responsibly, so that their encounter with his grace will give rise to a truly new life. A fitting community penance service could lead to a richer experience of the individual celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation, which “is the means to satisfy man with the righteousness that comes from the Redeemer himself.” (32) The places where this celebration takes place should be appropriately arranged to foster a spirit of recollection. (33)

Since “pardon, freely granted by God, implies in consequence a real change of life, a gradual elimination of evil within, and a renewal in our way of living,” the pastoral staff of shrines should support the pilgrims’ perseverance in the fruits of the Spirit in every possible way. They should also be especially attentive to make available that expression of the “total gift of the mercy of God” which is the indulgence. Through indulgences, “the repentant sinner receives a remission of the temporal punishment due for the sins already forgiven as regards the fault.” (34) In the profound experience of the “communion of saints” that the pilgrim has in the shrine, it will be easier for him to understand “how much each of us can help others – living or dead – to become ever more intimately united with the Father in heaven.” (35)

As for the celebration of the Eucharist, it should be kept in mind that it is the center and the heart of the whole life of the shrine, an event of grace which “contains the Church’s entire spiritual wealth.” (36) For this reason, it is appropriate that the unity that flows from the sacrament of the Eucharist should be manifested in a special way, by gathering together in one celebration the different groups of visitors. In the same way, the Eucharistic presence of the Lord Jesus should be adored not only by individuals, but also by all pilgrim groups, making use of special pious

exercises prepared with great care, as in fact happens in many shrines, based on the conviction that the “Eucharist contains and expresses all the forms of prayer.” (37)

Above all, the celebration of the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist gives shrines a particular dignity: “Shrines should not be considered marginal or less important, but rather essential places, places where people go to obtain Grace, even before they obtain graces.” (38)

12. A place of ecclesial communion

Given new birth by the Word and the sacraments, those who have come to the shrine of “dead stones” become a shrine of “living stones” and are thus capable of having a *renewed experience* of that communion in faith and holiness that is the Church. In this sense, we can say that a shrine is the place where the Church of people alive in the living God can be reborn. There, each individual can rediscover the gift that the creativity of the Spirit has given to him or her for the benefit of all. In the shrine too, everyone can discern and develop his or her own vocation and become open to living it out in service to others, especially in the parish community, where human differences come together and are articulated in *ecclesial communion*. (39) For this reason, careful attention should be paid to the pastoral care of vocations and of the family, itself the “privileged place and shrine where the great and intimate events in the history of each unique human being are lived out.” (40)

Communion with the Holy Spirit, brought about through communion with the sacred realities of the Word and the sacraments, gives birth to the communion of saints, God’s People, made such by the Holy Spirit. In a particular way, the Virgin Mary, “model of the Church in the order of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ” (41), venerated in so many shrines (42), helps the faithful to understand and accept the working of the Holy Spirit that brings about the communion of saints in Christ.

The intense experience of the Church’s unity which shrines provide can also help pilgrims to discern and welcome the promptings of the Spirit that lead them in a special way to pray and work for the unity of all Christians. (43) Shrines can be places where ecumenical commitment is strongly promoted, since there the change of heart and holiness of life that are “the soul of the whole ecumenical movement” (44) is fostered and the grace of unity given by the Lord is experienced. In the shrine too, a practical “sharing in spiritual activities and resources” can occur, especially through common prayer and in use of sacred places (45), which greatly promotes the path of unity when the criteria laid down by Church authorities are fully respected.

This experience of Church must be particularly fostered through the fitting welcome given to pilgrims to the shrine. This should take into consideration the specific characteristics of each group and each individual, the yearnings of their hearts and their authentic spiritual needs.

In the shrine, we learn to open our heart to everyone, in particular to those who are different from us: the guest, the stranger, the immigrant, the refugee, those of other religions, non-believers. In this way the shrine does not only exist as the setting for an experience of Church, but also becomes a gathering-place open to all humanity.

Indeed, it should be realized that on numerous occasions, due to historical and cultural traditions and to greater ease of travel, the Christian faithful are joined in their pilgrimages to shrines both by members of other Churches and ecclesial Communities and by the followers of other religions. A certainty that the plan of salvation embraces them too (46), a recognition of their oftentimes exemplary fidelity to their own religious convictions (47), and a common experience of the same historical events open new horizons and show the urgency of ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue. Shrines can enable this to be carried on in the presence of the holy Mystery of God, who welcomes everyone. (48) At the same time, it must be kept in mind that shrines are meeting-places for an encounter with Christ through the Word and the sacraments. Consequently there is need for constant vigilance against all possible forms of syncretism. Shrines are likewise meant to be a sign of contradiction with regard to pseudo-spiritualistic movements, such as the New Age movement. Rather than a generic religious sentiment based exclusively on the heightened use of natural human faculties, shrines strongly insist on the primacy of God and the need to be open to his saving work in Christ for true human fulfillment.

III. THE SHRINE, A PROPHECY OF THE HEAVENLY HOMELAND

13. A sign of hope

The shrine, as a *memory* of our origin in the Lord and a sign of the divine presence, is also a prophecy of our ultimate and definitive homeland: the Kingdom of God, which will come about when, according to his promise: “I shall set my shrine in their midst forever.” (*Ez* 37:26)

As a sign, the shrine does not only remind us whence we come and who we are, but also opens our eyes to discern where we are going, the goal of our pilgrimage in life and history. The shrine, a work of human hands, points beyond itself to the heavenly Jerusalem, our Mother, the city coming down from God, all adorned as a bride (cf. *Rev* 21:2), the perfect eschatological shrine where the glorious divine presence is directly and personally experienced: “I could not see any temple in the city, for the Lord Almighty and the Lamb were themselves the temple.” (*Rev* 21:22) In that city and temple there will be no more tears, no more sadness, or suffering, or death (cf. *Rev* 21:4).

The shrine thus appears as a *prophetic sign of hope*, an appeal to a broader horizon which discloses the promise that does not disappoint. Amid life’s difficulties, the shrine, an edifice of stone, points to the homeland glimpsed from afar but not yet attained, anticipation of which, in faith and hope, sustains Christ’s disciples on their pilgrim way. It is significant that after the great trials of the Exile, the Chosen People felt the need to express a sign of their hope by rebuilding the Temple, the shrine of adoration and praise. Israel made every possible sacrifice to restore this sign to her eyes and heart, not only because it would remind her of the love of God who chose her and lived in her midst, but also because it would evoke a yearning for the ultimate goal of the promise towards which God’s pilgrims travel in every age. The eschatological event on which the faith of Christians is founded is the rebuilding of the temple which is the body of the Crucified One, brought about by his glorious resurrection, the pledge of our hope (cf. *1 Cor* 15:12-28).

A living icon of this hope is first and foremost the presence in shrines of the sick and the suffering. (49) Meditation on God's saving work helps them understand that through their sufferings they are sharing in a privileged way in the healing power of the redemption accomplished by Christ (50) and proclaiming before the world the victory of the Risen One. Together with them, all those who accompany and assist them with active charity are witnesses of the hope of the Kingdom inaugurated by the Lord Jesus, starting precisely with the poor and the suffering: "Go back and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind see again, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, the good news is proclaimed to the poor." (*Lk* 7:22)

14. An invitation to joy

The hope that does not disappoint (cf. *Rm* 5:5) fills our hearts with joy (cf. *ibid.*, 15:13). In shrines, the People of God learns to be the "Church of joy". All who have entered the mystery of the shrine know that God is already at work in our human world which even now, despite the darkness of the present time, is the dawn of the time to come, that the Kingdom of God is even now present among us and so our hearts can already be full of joy, trust and hope, in spite of the pain, death, tears and blood that cover the face of the earth.

Psalm 122, one of the Psalms sung by the pilgrims journeying towards the Temple, says: "I rejoiced that they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'" This witness echoes the sentiments of all those who go to shrines, and above all the joy of meeting their brothers and sisters (cf. *Ps* 133:1).

In shrines, we celebrate the "joy of forgiveness" that impels us to "celebrate and rejoice" (*Lk* 15:32), since "there is rejoicing among the angels of God over even a single repentant sinner" (*Lk* 15:10). There, gathered around the one table of the Word and the Eucharist, we experience the "joy of communion" with Christ that Zaccheus experienced when he welcomed the Lord into his home "with joy" (*Lk* 19:6). This indeed is the "perfect joy" (*Jn* 15:11) that no one can ever take away (cf. *Jn* 16:23), treasured in a faithful heart which has itself become a living temple of the Eternal One, a shrine of flesh for the worship of God in spirit and truth. Together with the Psalmist, each pilgrim is invited to say: "I shall go to the altar of God, to the God of my joy. I will rejoice and praise you on the harp, O God, my God." (*Ps* 43:4)

15. A call to conversion and renewal

As a sign, the shrine gives witness that we are not made to live and die, but to live and triumph over death through the victory of Christ. As a consequence, the community celebrating its God in the shrine remembers that it is a pilgrim Church journeying towards the Promised Land in a state of *constant conversion and renewal*. The shrine at hand is not the last step of the journey. Tasting the love of God there, the faithful realize that they have not reached their final destination. Instead they sense a more powerful yearning for the heavenly Jerusalem, the desire for heaven. Thus, shrines make us acknowledge both the holiness of those to whom they are dedicated and our condition as sinners who need to begin anew each day the pilgrimage towards God's grace. They make us realize that the Church "is at once holy and ever in need of being purified" (51), since its members are sinners.

The Word of God helps us to keep this tension alive, especially in the prophetic criticism of shrines which have become places of empty ritual: “Who has asked you to trample through my courts? Bring no more futile cereal offerings, the smoke from them fills me with disgust. New moons, Sabbaths, assemblies – I cannot endure solemnity combined with guilt.... Cease doing evil. Learn to do good, search for justice, discipline the violent, be just to the orphan, plead for the widow. (*Is* 1:12-17) Sacrifice pleasing to God is a broken, contrite heart (cf. *Ps* 51:17). As Jesus affirmed: It is not anyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’ who will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but the person who does the will of my Father in heaven.” (*Mt* 7:21)

The need for continuous conversion is inseparable from the proclamation of the goal to which theological hope is directed. Every time the community of the faithful gathers together in the shrine, it does so to remind itself of that other shrine, the future city, the dwelling of God, which we wish to begin building already in this world and which we cannot help but desire, filled with hope, conscious of our limitations, striving to prepare as best we can the coming of the Kingdom. The mystery of the shrine thus reminds the pilgrim Church on earth of her contingency, of the fact that she is directed to a greater goal, the future homeland, that fills the heart with hope and peace. This stimulus to constant conversion in hope, this witness of the primacy of God’s Kingdom, of which the Church is the beginning and the first-fruits, must be particularly encouraged in the pastoral care which is provided in the shrine, for the growth of the community and of individual believers.

16. Symbol of the new heavens and the new earth

The shrine takes on a *prophetic significance*, because it is a sign of that greater hope that points to the final and definitive destination, where each individual will be fully human, respected and fulfilled according to the righteousness of God. For this reason, the shrine becomes a constant call to critique the myopia of all human projects that would impose themselves as absolutes. It can therefore be considered a protest against every worldly presumption, against every political dictatorship, against every ideology that claims to say everything there is to be said about man, since it reminds us that there is another dimension, the Kingdom of God, that is yet to come in its fullness. In the shrine, the Magnificat is constantly echoed. There the Church “sees uprooted that sin which is found at the early history of man and woman, the sin of disbelief and of ‘little faith’ in God;” there, “Mary boldly proclaims the undimmed truth about God: the holy and almighty God, who from the beginning is the source of all gifts, he who ‘has done great things in her’.” (52)

Shrines bear witness to the eschatological dimension of the Christian faith, the tension experienced as it moves towards the fullness of the Kingdom. This is the foundation and source of the moral and political vocation of the faithful to offer, in history, a critical reading of human projects in the light of the Gospel, one that reminds men and women of their higher destiny, prevents them from being impoverished by the myopia of materialism and obliges them to serve unceasingly as the leaven (cf. *Mt* 13:33) of a more just and more humane society.

Precisely because they are reminders of another dimension, that of the “new heavens and the new earth” (*Rev* 21:1), shrines stimulate us to live as a critical and prophetic ferment in these present heavens and in this present earth and they renew the vocation of Christians to live in the world,

while not being of the world (cf. *Jn 17:16*). This vocation is a rejection of the ideological exploitation of any sign whatsoever, in order to be a stimulating presence at the service of the edification of the whole person in each person, according to the will of the Lord.

In this light, we can understand how a thoughtful plan of pastoral action can make shrines places of education in ethical values, particularly justice, solidarity, peace and the protection of creation, and thus contribute to the growth of quality of life for everyone.

CONCLUSION

17. A convergence of efforts

Shrines are not only human achievements, but also visible signs of the presence of the invisible God. For this reason, they call for an appropriate convergence of human efforts and a proper awareness of the roles and responsibilities of those concerned with the pastoral care which they provide, precisely to bring about a full recognition and a fruitful reception of the gift that the Lord gives to his people through each shrine.

Shrines offer a valuable service to the individual particular Churches, above all by making available the proclamation of the Word of God and the celebration of the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. (53) This service expresses and strengthens the historical and spiritual bonds linking shrines with the Churches in whose heart they were born. It demands that the pastoral action carried out by the shrine should be fully incorporated into that of the Bishops, with particular concern for what pertains particularly to the “charism” of the place and the spiritual benefit of the faithful who go there on pilgrimage.

Under the guidance of the individual Bishops or of the whole Episcopal Conference, depending on each case, the specific pastoral identity and organizational structure of shrines should be defined in their proper statutes. (54) The sharing of shrines in the diocesan plan of pastoral care requires that arrangements be made for the specific preparation of the persons and the communities to which each shrine is entrusted.

It is equally important for cooperation and forms of association between shrines to be encouraged, especially among those in the same geographical and cultural area, as well as the coordination of their pastoral activity with the pastoral care of tourists and human mobility in general. The remarkable growth of such initiatives – from international congresses to continental and national meetings (55) – calls attention to the increasing numbers of people visiting shrines. It is also a reminder of pressing new needs and has given rise to new pastoral responses to the changing challenges of places and time.

The “mystery of the temple” thus offers a wealth of possibilities for meditation and fruitful activity. As a memory of our origin, the shrine calls to mind God’s initiative and helps pilgrims to recognize it with a sense of awe, gratitude and commitment. As a place of the divine presence, it bears witness to God’s faithfulness and his constant activity in the midst of His people, through his Word and the sacraments. As a prophecy, or a reminder of our heavenly homeland, it makes us remember that everything is not finished, but must yet be accomplished

fully in accordance with God's promise which is our goal. Precisely by showing the relativity of everything penultimate in regard to our ultimate homeland, shrines point to Christ as the new Temple of mankind reconciled with God.

Keeping in mind these three theological dimensions of the shrine, the pastoral care provided in shrines should be concerned to foster a constant renewal of the spiritual life and of commitment to the Church, in an intense and critical vigilance towards all cultures and human achievements, yet also in a spirit of cooperation, open to the demands of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.

18. Mary, the living shrine

The Virgin Mary is the living shrine of the Word of God, the Ark of the New and Eternal Covenant. In fact, Saint Luke's account of the Annunciation of the angel to Mary nicely incorporates the images of the tent of meeting with God in Sinai and of the Temple of Zion. Just as the cloud covered the people of God marching in the desert (cf. *Nm* 10:34; *Dt* 33:12; *Ps* 91:4) and just as the same cloud, as a sign of the divine mystery present in the midst of Israel, hovered over the Ark of the Covenant (cf. *Ex* 40:35), so now the shadow of the Most High envelops and penetrates the tabernacle of the new covenant that is the womb of Mary (cf. *Lk* 1:35).

Indeed, Luke the evangelist subtly links the words of the angel to the song that the prophet Zephaniah raises to the presence of God in Zion. To Mary, the angel says: Rejoice, you who are filled with God's grace! The Lord is with you, Mary, do not be afraid.... You are to conceive in your womb and bear a son... (*Lk* 1:28-31). To Zion, the prophet says: Rejoice, exult with all your heart, daughter of Jerusalem! ... The Lord is king among you, Israel, you have nothing more to fear.... Zion, have no fear..., the Lord your God is there with you, the warrior-Saviour." (*Zeph* 3:14-17) In the "womb" (*be qereb*) of the daughter of Zion, symbol of Jerusalem, site of the temple, the presence of God with his people is made manifest. In the womb of the new daughter of Zion, the Lord establishes his perfect temple in order to have full communion with mankind through his Son, Jesus Christ.

This theme is reasserted in the scene of Mary's visit to Elizabeth. The question that the latter addresses to the future mother of Jesus is significant: "Why should I be honored with a visit from the mother of my Lord?" (*Lk* 1:43) Her words evoke those of David before the Ark of the Lord: "How can the ark of Yahweh come to be with me?" (*2 Sam* 6:9) Mary is thus the new Ark of the Lord's presence. In passing we may note that here the title *Kyrios*, "Lord", applied to Christ, appears for the first time in the Gospel of Luke. This is the title that translated the sacred name *YHWH* in the Greek Bible. Just as the ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obed-Edom for three months, filling it with blessings (cf. *2 Sam* 6:11), so too Mary, the living Ark of God, remained three months in the house of Elizabeth with her sanctifying presence (cf. *Lk* 1:56).

Here the statement of St. Ambrose is instructive: "Mary was the temple of God, not the God of the temple; hence only he who was at work in the temple is to be adored." (56) For this reason, "the Church, throughout her life, maintains with the Mother of God a link which embraces, in the saving mystery, the past, the *present* and the *future*, and venerates her as the spiritual mother of

humanity and the advocate of grace” (57), as is shown by the presence of numerous Marian shrines all over the world (58), which constitute an authentic “missionary Magnificat”. (59)

In the many Marian shrines, the Holy Father states, “not only individuals or local groups, but sometimes whole nations and societies, even whole continents, seek to meet the Mother of the Lord, the one who is blessed because she believed, is the first among believers and therefore became the Mother of Emmanuel. This is the message of the Land of Palestine, the spiritual homeland of all Christians because it was the homeland of the Savior of the world and of his Mother. This is the message of the many churches in Rome and throughout the world which have been raised up in the course of the centuries by the faith of Christians. This is the message of centers like Guadalupe, Lourdes, Fatima and the others situated in the various countries. Among them how could I fail to mention the one in my own native land, Jasna Gora? One could perhaps speak of a specific ‘geography’ of faith and Marian devotion, which includes all these special places of pilgrimage where the People of God seek to meet the Mother of God in order to find, within the radius of the maternal presence of her ‘who believed’, a strengthening of their own faith.” (60)

To this end, those who are responsible for the pastoral care of shrines should be ever attentive that the various expressions of Marian piety are integrated into the liturgical life which is the center and the very meaning of the shrine.

In approaching Mary, pilgrims should feel themselves called to experience that “paschal dimension” (61) which gradually transforms their life through the hearing of the Word, the celebration of the sacraments and a commitment on behalf of their brothers and sisters.

From the encounter of communities and individuals with Mary, “Star of evangelization”, (62) pilgrims, like the Apostles before them, will be impelled to proclaim by word and by witness of life “the mighty works of God.” (*Acts 2:11*)

Vatican City, 8 May 1999.

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President

† **Archbishop Francesco Gioia**
Secretary

(1) Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *Pilgrimage in the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000* (11 April 1998), 32; the text refers to *Ex 27:21; 29:4.10-11.30.32.42.44.*

(2) Cf. *ibid.*; Document of the Italian Episcopal Conference «*Venite, saliamo sul monte del Signore*» (*Is 2,3*). *Il pellegrinaggio alle soglie del terzo millennio* (29 June 1998).

(3) *Code of Canon Law*, can. 1230.

- (4) *Ibid.*, can. 1234, §1.
- (5) Pope John Paul II, Homily in Corrientes, Argentina (9 April 1987).
- (6) Pope John Paul II, *Angelus* (12 July 1992).
- (7) SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 6.
- (8) The various shrines of ancient Israel (Shechem, Bethel, Beersheba, Shiloh) are all linked to the stories of the Patriarchs and are memorials of the encounter with the living God.
- (9) Epist. 3,1: *Sources Chrétiennes* 363,124.
- (10) *Ibid.*, 3,2: *SCh* 363, 126.
- (11) In shrines, it is possible «to enkindle the fire of divine love in every home», as Theodoret of Cyr observes with regard to the Church built in honor of St. Thecla (*Historia Religiosa* 29,7: *SCh* 257, 239).
- (12) St. Augustine, *Letter to Proba*, 130,8,15.
- (13) St. Augustine, *Commentary on the Letter of John*, IX,9.
- (14) SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 65.
- (15) SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Constitution. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 111.
- (16) Cf. Pope John Paul II, Homily at the Shrine of Belém, Brazil (8 July 1980).
- (17) The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* notes that «for pilgrims who are in search of their own living springs, shrines are exceptional places where the various forms of Christian prayer may be lived ‘as Church’ » (2691).
- (18) SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 54 and 65.
- (19) Pseudo-Eusebius of Alexandria, *Sermons* 16: PG 86, 416.
- (20) Pope John Paul II writes in his Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini* (31 May 1998), «There is also a rediscovery of ancient religious practices, such as pilgrimages; and often the faithful take advantage of Sunday rest to visit a shrine where, with the whole family perhaps, they can spend time in a more intense experience of faith. These are moments of grace which must be fostered through evangelization and guided by genuine pastoral wisdom» (52).

- (21) One thinks again of the Songs of Ascent to the temple of Jerusalem and of the image of God, the guardian of Israel, that they present (cf. esp. *Pss* 121 and 127).
- (22) Gregory of Nyssa writes: «Wherever you are, God will come to you, if the dwelling in your soul is found to be such that the Lord can dwell in you» (*Epistula* 2,16: SCh 363, 121).
- (23) SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 6.
- (24) POPE PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), 48.
- (25) Cf. POPE JOHN PAUL II Homily at the Shrine of Zapopán, Mexico (30 January 1979).
- (26) Cf. INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, Doc. *Fides et Inculturatio* (1987), III, 2-7.
- (27) PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE FOR MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE, *Walk towards the Splendour of God. Your God Walks with You*. Proceedings of the First World Congress on the Pastoral Care of Shrines and Pilgrimages (Rome 26-29 February 1992), Final Document, 8, p. 216.
- (28) *Pilgrimage in the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000*, 34.
- (29) POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Message* for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the International Catholic Organization for Cinema (31 October 1978).
- (30) Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 4.
- (31) Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia* (30 November 1980), 1.
- (32) Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (4 March 1979), 20.
- (33) For a basic orientation with regard to the catechesis and the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, cf. Pope John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* (2 December 1984).
- (34) Pope John Paul II, Bull of Indiction of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 *Incarnationis Mysterium* (20 November 1998), 9.
- (35) *Ibid.*, 10. Cf. POPE PAUL VI, Apostolic Constitution *Indulgentiarum Doctrina* (1 January 1967).
- (36) SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 5.

(37) *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2653; cf. POPE PAUL VI, Encyclical Letter *Mysterium Fidei* (3 September 1965); CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP, Instruction *Inaestimabile Donum* (3 April 1980).

(38) POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Letter to Archbishop Pasquale Macchi on the Seventh Centenary of the Shrine of the Holy House of Loreto* (15 August 1993), 7.

(39) Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 10.

(40) POPE JOHN PAUL II, Address at the General Audience (3 January 1979); cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11.

(41) SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 63.

(42) As Pope John Paul II has stated: «Marian shrines are like the house of the Mother, refreshment and rest points on the long road that leads to Christ. They are forges, where, through the simple and humble faith of the ‘poor in spirit’ (cf. *Mt* 5:3), one comes in contact again with the great wealth that Christ has entrusted and granted to the Church, particularly the Sacraments, grace, mercy, charity towards our brothers who are suffering and sick» (*Angelus*, 21 June 1987).

(43) Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 4.

(44) *Ibid.* 8.

(45) PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* (25 March 1993), 29 and 103.

(46) Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 16.

(47) Cf. POPE JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (4 March 1979), 6.

(48) Cf. POPE JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (10 November 1994), 52-53.

(49) Cf. POPE JOHN PAUL II, Homily at the Mass for the Sick in St. Peter’s Basilica (11 February 1990).

(50) Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 41; cf. POPE JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris* (11 February 1984).

(51) SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 8; cf. Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 6-7.

(52) POPE JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Mater* (25 March 1987), 37.

(53) On the other hand, it is particularly appropriate that the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Matrimony be celebrated in the parish of residence; in this way the faithful will be helped to grasp the community significance of these sacraments; cf. POPE JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (30 December 1988), 26.

(54) *Code of Canon Law*, can. 1232. The French Episcopal Conference, for example, has issued a Charter of Shrines.

(55) The Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People is active in this area, as is demonstrated by its organization of two World Congresses (Rome, 26-29 February 1992 and Ephesus, Turkey, 4-7 May 1998) and two at a regional level (Máriapocs, Hungary, 2-4 September 1996 and Pompeii, Italy, 17-21 October 1998), cf. the relative Proceedings.

(56) *De Spiritu Sancto III*, 11:80.

(57) POPE JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Mater* (25 March 1987), 47.

(58) POPE JOHN PAUL II reminds us: "I know very well that every people, every country, indeed every diocese, has its holy places in which the heart of the whole people of God beats, one could say, in more lively fashion: places of special encounter between God and human beings; places in which Christ dwells in a special way in our midst. If these places are so often dedicated to his Mother, it reveals all the more fully to us the nature of his Church," *Homily* at the Shrine of Our Lady of Knock, Ireland (30 September 1979).

(59) POPE JOHN PAUL II, Message to the Third Latin-American Missionary Congress (Bogotá, 6 July 1987).

(60) POPE JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Mater* (25 March 1987), 28.

(61) CONG. FOR DIVINE WORSHIP, Circular Letter to the Presidents of the National Liturgical Commissions *Orientamenti e proposte per la celebrazione dell'Anno mariano* (3 April 1987), 78. *Notitiae* 23 (1987), p. 386.

(62) POPE PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), 82.