

## Vatican by Maria Cristina Fiocchi

### A new Christian humanism

*A Spanish pilgrimage, and two writings on the 50th anniversary of World War II, mark the Pope's newest endeavors.*

**T**he Holy See saw a flurry of diplomatic activity at the end of August, directed by the Pope. Tireless as always, he led a youth pilgrimage to the venerable shrine of Santiago de Compostela in Spain; and he responded to the hopes of the multitudes who long for freedom and democracy in Eastern Europe, by naming a Catholic bishop in Belorussia for the first time in 60 years.

Ever the diligent adviser to his beloved Poland, he helped set up regular diplomatic relations between Poland and the Holy See, on July 17. Now he is proposing to go as a missionary to war-torn Lebanon. The spirit that inspires John Paul II's activism does not come from elaborate Vatican diplomatic projects, but from his deep conviction of the need to carry the Christian message to all corners of the Earth. He had announced it to the thousands of young people who answered his invitation to go to Santiago: "The Church seeks to be the traveling companion of mankind—for our mankind, betimes suffering and abandoned because of so many betrayals, and always in need of being guided toward salvation through the dense fog that hangs over it."

The Pope asked the young people to help him make a new Christian humanism flourish, through the renewed discovery of Christ, the keystone of our civilization. The words of Jesus, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," were the motto of the entire pilgrimage. John Paul II criticized the "spirit of this world": "The criterion by which the world is ruled," the Pope

told the youth during the Aug. 20 Sunday Mass at Compostela, "is the criterion of success. To have power . . . to have economic power, to make others' subordination manifest. To have the cultural power to manipulate consciousness. To use . . . to abuse! This is the *spirit of this world*."

The Pope invited the young people not to be enslaved to this "spirit" and to seek true freedom, the freedom given us by Christ. Just before he left Spain, he went to Oviedo, in the Asturias, where the the liberation from Moorish occupation began. In this historic place, John Paul II condemned both communism and the capitalism which is based upon mere profit seeking: "Is it not perhaps right before everyone's eyes that societies founded on atheistic materialism, with their collectivist-bureaucratic organization of human labor, have failed? But the neo-capitalist society interested in profit, certainly has no fewer problems." What should Christians do? They should sanctify human labor and in so doing, said the Pope, "bear witness by their own works to a true humanization of nature, leaving an imprint of justice and beauty upon it."

On the importance of the role of Europe and the need for a rediscovery of its Christian roots, the Pope issued two documents: one written for the 50th anniversary of the onset of World War II, the other a Message to the Bishops of Poland, for the same occasion. John Paul II stated that "the hour of darkness," after 50 years, is still continuing: "This continent exported war, today its duty is to be the

maker of peace."

What caused the explosion of such a terrible conflagration? The Pontiff cited contempt for man and for God: "Even well before 1939, in certain sectors of European culture there appeared a will to cancel God and his image from man's horizons. They began indoctrinating children in that way, from their early childhood," he went on. "The new paganism and the systems connected to it, certainly ruthlessly attacked the Jews, but they equally targeted Christianity, whose teachings had formed the soul of Europe. Through the persecution of the people, the Gospel message of the equal dignity of all God's children was sneered at." In the final analysis, writes the Pontiff: "Nazi paganism and the Marxist dogma have in common the fact of being totalitarian ideologies, with a tendency to become substitute religions."

After recalling the Holocaust of the Jewish people, the Pope recalls the fate of Poland, which in September 1939 was "devastated and shattered at the whim of conscienceless invaders." Such situations, John Paul II insists, exist even today, and he cites Lebanon: "In this context and in these days it is needful to evoke the case of Lebanon, where concerted forces, pursuing their own interests, do not hesitate to endanger the very existence of nation."

The Pope then blasts the Yalta accord, which sacrificed Poland by treating it as a conquered land. The charge rings out as an indirect warning to today's makers of pacts between the U.S. and U.S.S.R. in the spirit of a "New Yalta." The document closes with an appeal to Europe: "I trust that the message of humanism and liberation, inherited from Europe's Christian history, will be able to once again stimulate its peoples and will continue to radiate in the world."