



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II

TO THE BISHOPS OF CESENA-SARSINA *To my Venerable Brother*

Bishop Lino Garavaglia, O.F.M. Cap.

of Cesena-Sarsina, Italy Two hundred years ago, Cesena experienced an extraordinary moment in her history: the Supreme Pontiff Pius VI, Giovanni Angelo Braschi who came from Cesena, died in fact on 29 August 1799 in Valence, and on 14 March 1800 Luigi Barnaba Chiaramonti, also from Cesena and who took the name of Pius VII, was elected to succeed him. If we consider that Pius VI's Pontificate began almost 25 years earlier and that Pius VII's lasted more than 23, we can see that for almost 50 years there was a son of this illustrious city in the See of Peter. It is therefore very timely and gives me great pleasure, Venerable Brother, that this special anniversary should be remembered in Cesena with two important events: a convention promoted by the Dioceses on the Pontificates of Pius VI and Pius VII; and an exhibition, desired by the Malatestiana Library Institution and including an academic publication on the documents concerning the two Popes which are preserved in the Malatestiana and Piancastelli Institutions. For these celebrations I would like to express my cordial affection to you and to the beloved Christian community of Cesena, as I assure you of my spiritual closeness, as it were to attest, two centuries later, to the perennial gratitude of the universal Church for these two great natives of Cesena. Everyone recognizes, in fact, that during the very turbulent historical period in which Providence called them to exercise their Petrine ministry - the revolutionary and Napoleonic era - Pius VI and Pius VII contributed resolutely to safeguarding God's People and to guaranteeing the stability of ecclesiastical institutions. With their personal suffering in times of exile which both endured, they honoured Christ and the pontifical dignity more than ever, working effectively for the genuine building of the Church through a courageous Gospel witness, illumined by the victorious power of the Cross. I am pleased to take this present opportunity to express the hope that the Diocese of Cesena-Sarsina will draw abundant fruit from the grace of the Great Jubilee, now close at hand, to enter the third millennium renewed within. Thus it will be able to offer the Church and society mature men and women in the faith, ready to take an active part in the work of the new evangelization. This is the best way to honour the memory of all who worked in the Lord's vineyard before us. It is likewise the way to ensure that the precious heritage bequeathed by my venerable Predecessors Pius VI and Pius VII will continue to bear fruit in their native land, in Italy and the whole world. As I express my best wishes for the convention and the exhibition, I extend my good wishes to everyone who will be taking part in the anniversary celebrations and cordially impart a special Apostolic Blessing to you and to the diocesan community. *From the Vatican, 30 September 1999.* JOHN PAUL II © Copyright 1999 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana