



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO A GROUP OF PILGRIMS FROM BRESCIA, ITALY

*Tuesday, 24 April 1979 Beloved faithful of Brescia!*1. Your heart and your faith have brought you here to Rome, to the house of Peter's Successor, together with your dearly loved Bishop and with numerous civil Authorities. You have come to offer prayers of suffrage in the Vatican Basilica, which preserves—not far from St Peter's tomb—the mortal remains of Pope Paul VI, and also to meet the one who is his successor today. I receive you with deep affection and greet you one by one with particular benevolence, and in you I greet the whole diocese of Brescia, which you represent. Be assured that in the Pope's heart a special place is reserved for you, fellow-citizens of my unforgettable predecessor. Brescia, a diocese of great Catholic traditions and of a deeply religious population, is and remains in my heart, as it was in the heart of Pope Paul VI.2. While I express to you my thanks for the visit, I wish to tell you, in the first place, my sincere satisfaction at the first purpose of this pilgrimage: that is, to honour the memory of Pope Paul VI. Uttering this name, which calls up a historical period that was extremely eventful, there at once stands out in our minds the gigantic figure of the great Pontiff who, in a period of the history of the Church that was certainly not an easy one, taught us, with a daily martyrdom of solicitude and work, what it means to love and truly serve Christ and souls. Particularly sensitive to the pressing needs of modern culture, with penetrating knowledge of the multiple and vast problems of the modern world, extremely aware of the responsibility of his high ministry, sharing the physical and moral suffering of the whole of mankind, Paul VI, enamoured of Christ and a friend of every man, a faithful servant of truth in charity, and a tireless defender of the rights of God and of man, was and will be for ever the everlasting glory of Brescia, of Italy and of the Church! Before the secularization which has invested society and the ferments that have upset the Church internally in the last few years, Paul VI, misunderstood and sometimes even slandered, was always a beacon of light for all men, continually strengthening his brethren in faith. I am happy to recall what I wrote about him in the recent Encyclical "[Redemptor Hominis](#)": "As helmsman of the Church, the bark of Peter, he knew how to preserve a providential tranquillity and balance even in the most critical moments, when the Church seemed to be shaken from within, and he always maintained unhesitating hope in the Church's solidity... Gratitude is due to Paul VI because, while respecting every particle of truth contained in the various human opinions, he preserved at the same time the providential balance of the bark's helmsman" ([n. 4](#)). The addresses, the Encyclicals, the Apostolic Exhortations, which he bequeathed to us, are a monument of doctrine, a real "Summa Theologica". Therefore the opportune initiative undertaken by your diocese, to set up the "*Paul VI*" Institute for a thorough study of the personality and the works of the great Pontiff and of his times, gives me joy and satisfaction. I know that this international Centre is being structured with painstaking and earnest care, and that it has already started its activity recently. It will be, among other things, a precious instrument at the disposal of scholars from all over the world for their researches. I earnestly hope that this Institute *vivat, crescat et floreat*.3. I see,

then, another reason in the purpose of your meeting with the Pope today: to have from him a word of comfort and guidance for your commitment of Christian testimony. Well, then, together with Pope Paul VI, I say to you: "Be faithful, people of Brescia, promise yourselves and assure the new generations that you will keep the heritage of the Christian faith firm, strong, complete and fruitful" (Paul VI, *Address to the Pilgrimage from Brescia* [25 January 1965]). Brescia is famous for its cultural and publishing initiatives: I wish, therefore, to urge you earnestly to sow always and only the good grain of truth. We must give the certainty and the security of truth, in the name of Jesus who said: "I am the light of the world" (Jn 8:12). "For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth" (Jn 18:37). Today it is more necessary than ever, in the first place, to sow the good grain of metaphysical truth. In fact theological confusion and moral crises generally have as their cause a philosophical crisis. It is necessary to abide firmly by good and wholesome metaphysics, which refers to the Absolute, to the one transcendent God, the creator and regulator of the universe and of man. Without the metaphysical Absolute, in fact, the "foundation" for any construction is lacking and any error can be justified. In the Encyclical "[Humani Generis](#)" Pius XII wrote with wisdom and concern: "Everyone knows how much the Church appreciates the value of human reason, which has the task of proving with certainty the existence of one personal God, of proving invincibly by means of divine signs the foundations of Christian faith itself... But this task can be carried out suitably and reliably if reason is duly cultivated..." ([Humani Generis](#), 29). Then it is necessary to sow revealed truth, as it was proclaimed by the Divine Master and as it is taught by the Magisterium of the Church, with divine assistance; convinced of what Jesus himself said: "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters" (Lk 11:23). Only in this way will a contribution be made to nourishing and strengthening a genuine and deep faith, which will illuminate and guide the whole activity of the Christian. Today a vague and superficial faith is not enough, an enlightened and intensely lived faith is necessary, which will flourish in consistent good works. So let us sow the truth with full hands and let us try to make our faith more and more convinced and staunch: this is the instruction I leave you in the name of the Church, in memory of Paul VI, in the moving and demanding anxiety of the world today. May you be assisted by the Blessed Virgin, "Our Lady of Graces", whom Paul VI deeply loved and often recalled with such nostalgia. May the tender love of this late Pontiff for the Blessed Virgin be an example for you, and accompany you together with my cordial blessing, which I willingly extend also to your dear ones. © Copyright 1979 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana