



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO MEMBERS OF THE SOVEREIGN COUNCIL
OF THE ORDER OF MALTA**

Monday, 9 July 1979

Gentlemen,

I listened with deep pleasure to the noble words expressed on your behalf by the Grand Master of the Order, whom I intend to thank, while I greet him with deep cordiality, together with all of you and those whom you fittingly represent.

With today's meeting I come into contact for the first time, since my election to Peter's See, with the leaders and members of an ancient and illustrious Christian and Catholic institution such as the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, placed under the special protection of St John the Baptist.

I wish to tell you, therefore, my sincere joy in welcoming you to this house of the common Pastor of the universal Church, in which you are distinguished not only because of the impressive history of the Order, but also because of the concrete testimony of your particular Christian commitment. In your presence today, in fact, I am happy to see a filial act of devoted homage and tenacious faithfulness to the Apostolic See, but also and even more a clear sign of renewed concern for an ever deeper commitment of life spent in an evangelical way for the greater good of the Church and of all the brothers.

I know how widespread the Order of Malta is in the world and what efficacious dedication it has shown in more recent times in the field of various charitable initiatives and, in particular, in the important sector of hospital service. For all that you carry out in this sphere of activity, I thank you heartily. It seems to me that all your efforts are set along the line of the fulfilment of that which I wrote in my Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis*, when I said that "Man in the full truth of his existence,... is the *primary and fundamental way for the Church*, the way traced out by Christ himself, the way that leads invariably through the mystery of the Incarnation and the Redemption" (n. 14). So everything your Family does, to serve and advance man further in Christ's name will

certainly be blessed by the Lord, in conformity with his words: "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." (Mt 25:40.) And this certainly makes up the noblest claim to glory of the Order of Malta, which is added to those already obtained in past centuries and, in fact, surpasses them with the luminous power of the greatest evangelical commandment.

My word, at this point, cannot but become a pressing encouragement to continue along the main way of the Church, which is the same way taken by Christ, who offered himself for the salvation of all men. "And God is able," as St Paul assures us, "to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work. As it is written, 'He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor: his righteousness endures for ever'" (2 Cor 9:8-9).

As a token of these good wishes, I am happy to grant the special Apostolic Blessing to the Grand Master, and the leaders and members of the Sovereign Order of Malta, extending it also to all their dear ones.

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