



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO THE PILGRIMS FROM PADUA

Friday, 3 March 2000

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Diocese of Padua!

1. I greet you cordially and am pleased to welcome you to Rome and to St Peter's! The providential time of the Jubilee has brought you as pilgrims to the city of Rome in order to strengthen your faith in Christ and to reaffirm your commitment to living according to the spirit of the Gospel. Your large numbers are proof of the close and unbroken bond of communion and affection that unites your Church with the Successor of Peter. According to a pious tradition, in fact, St Prosdocimus, the first Bishop of Padua, was sent by the Apostle Peter to proclaim the Good News in the Euganean region. Since then, your Church has never forgotten her original link with the Apostolic See.

My thoughts first turn to dear and zealous Archbishop Antonio Mattiazzo, who occupies the chair from which so many of his eminent predecessors taught with great wisdom. In thanking him for the sentiments he expressed also on your behalf, I would like to greet you all, the faithful of a Church rich in saints and martyrs, ancient and noble traditions, priestly and religious vocations, and generous institutions. I greet the priests, the young men of the major seminary, accompanied here by their rector and professors, and the Brazilian pilgrims, together with the *Fidei donum* priest from Padua who works in their Diocese of Itaguaí.

I am also pleased to extend my fraternal greetings to the Orthodox Archbishop of Kherson, Ionafan, Secretary of the Holy Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and to the representative of the Romanian Metropolia of Craiova, who are taking part in this meeting.

2. We are observing the year of the Great Jubilee, which offers the faithful an opportunity to draw

abundantly from the treasures of grace and mercy which God has entrusted to the Church. The Lord asks all who yearn for courageous interior renewal to approach him with trust: "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink.... "Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water" (*Jn* 7: 37-38). He asks everyone for a change of mentality and lifestyle, in order to "follow the Lamb wherever he goes" (*Rv* 14: 4), and in this way to face daily life in conformity with the Gospel.

Following Christ with generous love requires intense and continuous interior growth. To this end it is necessary to cultivate a regular prayer life, to participate as often as possible in the Eucharist and the sacrament of Penance, and to practise the Gospel virtues, especially charity.

The Church of Padua's great tradition of holiness boasts numerous witnesses to the faith who have handed on to God's People the true meaning of a personal relationship with Christ and with his Body, the Church. How could we forget St Justina, St Daniel, St Maximus, Sts Bellinus and Fidentius, Bl. Eustochium and Bl. Jordan Forzatè, or the splendid figure of St Gregory Barbarigo, to mention but a few? Among them, I would like to include St Anthony of Padua and St Leopold Mandic who, although they were not born in your land, nevertheless preached the Word of God there and administered his divine mercy in the sacrament of Reconciliation with great zeal and tangible apostolic fruit. They are the glory of your Diocese. May you be able to draw continuously from their example and teaching the enthusiasm and courage to belong more completely and perfectly to Christ. Thus you will be ready to face the difficulties of our time and the challenges of the new evangelization with trust and hope.

3. To evangelize! This is the mission of every baptized person, dear brothers and sisters. Whatever one's state in life, everyone is called to bear witness to Christ and the Gospel. I hope that your pilgrimage will yield the desired fruits of religious and pastoral renewal. May your visit to the tombs of the Apostles strengthen your determination to flee from sin, to be converted to what is good and to follow the Lord.

To Our Lady of the Assumption, to whom the cathedral of your Diocese is dedicated, I entrust the intentions that motivate you on your Jubilee pilgrimage. From her I implore for you the grace of being authentic missionaries of the unfathomable love of God, who wants all men to be saved and to attain the fullness of truth (cf. 1 *Tm* 2: 4).

May Sts Peter and Paul, the pillars of the Church and your holy patrons, protect you. The Pope prays for you and imparts a special Apostolic Blessing to you, to your loved ones and to all the faithful of the Diocese of Padua.

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