



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO VARIOUS PILGRIM GROUPS

Saturday, 23 September 2000

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

1. It is a great joy for me to meet you at this Jubilee audience, which is a beautiful and important moment of your pilgrimage to Rome in the context of the Holy Year. You come from various Dioceses, each with its own history and its own particular traditions. However, our being together like this enables us to feel almost tangibly the profound bonds of communion that make us brothers and sisters in the one Body of Christ which is the Church: the same love that comes from the Trinity and enlivens the people of God, the same faith in Jesus the Saviour, the same commitment to proclaiming the Gospel. You have come to the Eternal City to share this deep experience of reconciliation with God and with your brothers and sisters. I ask the Lord to endow your Jubilee pilgrimage with abundant good fruits!

2. I first extend my affectionate greeting to you, *dear pilgrims from the Archdiocese of Naples*. I thank your Pastor, Cardinal Michele Giordano, who has just expressed your feelings of affection and spiritual closeness. I congratulate you all for your dedication in preparing to celebrate this Jubilee properly and, in particular, for having rightly placed the theme of the new evangelization at the centre of your pastoral action, making use of the good initiative of the *Gospel Centres*. I cannot but encourage you to continue generously on the path you have taken, making every effort increasingly to involve families in this missionary undertaking in which they play an essential role.

May these days spent at the tombs of the Apostles, deepening your bond of communion with the Church of Rome, help you face with greater courage and determination the inevitable moments of difficulty. May the Virgin Mary, whom you all love to invoke with the title of the "Brown Virgin", always accompany you with her assistance and maternal protection!

3. I now extend my cordial welcome to you, dear *brothers and sisters of the Diocese of Brescia!*

I greet you with affection, while extending a fraternal thought to your Bishop, Giulio Sanguinetti, whom I thank for his warm address. You know that celebrating the grace of the Jubilee means above all recovering an awareness of the roots of one's faith. The Christian experience down the centuries has produced an abundance of fruits in the community of Brescia, marked by special attention to the various aspects of society's problems. From this enlivening of social life through the Gospel leaven, the shining testimonies of priests, religious and laity have remained, the authentic champions of a committed Christianity, facing the needs of their time. Brescia in particular can boast of having given the Church a Pontiff of the stature of Paul VI, whose indelible memory lives on in the hearts of all. The examples of these distinguished personalities must spur you to respond with great courage and generosity to the challenges facing the Church of the third Christian millennium. In this Jubilee Year, during which we are all invited to return to the genuine sources of our faith, may you know how to live in depth the reality of the Christian community in its twofold aspect of communion and mission. This is my wish and, at the same time, the commitment I entrust to you as a fruit of your Jubilee pilgrimage.

4. I now greet the group of *pilgrims of the Diocese of Parma*, accompanied by Bishop Cesare Bonicelli, whom I thank for his kind words. The Jubilee, as the word itself says, is first and foremost a moment of joy and sharing. In this holy time the Church rejoices in the abundance of grace and mercy which God pours out on all who prepare their souls for reconciliation and interior renewal. May the Jubilee be for you, dear friends, an important moment in your ecclesial journey, which will give rise to a renewed enthusiasm for evangelization. Being reconciled with God and one's brethren is an essential condition for the effectiveness of the Gospel proclamation, because there is no Christian mission that does not spring from a deep experience of communion with God and with one's neighbour. I hope, in this Jubilee season, that you will experience the profound mystery of the Church, which is a mystery of both communion and mission.

5. I now address you, dear *brothers and sisters of the Archdiocese of Lucca*, who have come to Rome on your Jubilee pilgrimage accompanied by your Archbishop Bruno Tommasi, to whose greeting I listened with gratitude. Your Archdiocese is crossed by the ancient Via Francigena, which was traditionally used by pilgrims to Rome on their journey to the tombs of the Apostles.

This has contributed to increasing your traditional hospitality and fraternal welcome, which are still expressed in many forms of voluntary work and charity today. By relying on the great patrimony of faith and Christian civilization of your land, may you know how to renew, in our time too, the commitment to a witness of Gospel values and the desire to contribute effectively to building a renewed Christian culture. Always put Christ at the centre of your communities through careful listening to his word and the rediscovery of the Eucharist as the source and apex of all ecclesial life.

Not only will the attention to the formation of priests be of great help to you, but so will an ever increasing involvement of the laity in the sectors most suited to their state within the pastoral life of the diocesan community.

6. I now greet with affection the members of the *Apostleship of Prayer of the Diocese of Barcelona*, who have arrived in Rome on their Jubilee pilgrimage. Remember that it is the encounter with Jesus Christ through prayer which creates apostolic conditions that aim to inspire a sincere desire for holiness. With the help of grace, strive to make your adherence to Christ and his Church stronger and stronger, and your life witness more and more credible. In this way, you will find the Jubilee Year a special event of "personal renewal in a context of ever more intense prayer and of solidarity with one's neighbour" (*Tertio millennio adveniente*, n. 42).

7. The participants in the *Conference of European Cancer Leagues* are also here at this audience: in cordially greeting them, I extend my heartfelt good wishes for their fruitful work in such an important sector for human health.

I also greet the representatives of the *Italian-language Catholic Mission in Switzerland* led by the Salesian community of Zurich. May this pilgrimage to Rome and the grace of the Jubilee be an incentive for you to follow, with ever increasing generosity, the example of St John Bosco in your Christian commitments and in your witness of acceptance and solidarity, especially to those who are in spiritual and material difficulty.

Lastly, a special thought and wish go to the *Alpine troops* of the Bonate Sopra Bergamo Section and to the other groups of pilgrims who, with their participation, make this Jubilee more enriching and joyful.

8. Today is Saturday, the day traditionally dedicated to Our Lady. Let us entrust to Mary the abundance of grace and the commitments of Christian life which have flowed from this Jubilee. May the One who, with her unconditional "yes" to the divine will, offered the Saviour to the world, always guide and protect you on your journey. May you also be accompanied by my Blessing, which I impart to each of you with affection, and which I also willingly extend to your communities, your families and all your loved ones.

