



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE ITALIAN LEAGUE
FOR THE FIGHT AGAINST TUMOURS**

Monday, 25 February 2002

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. I am pleased to receive you on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of your beneficent association. I cordially greet your national President, Prof. Francesco Schittulli, whom I thank for his courteous words on your behalf. I also greet the members of the administrative board and to the representatives of the provincial branches of the *Lega Italiana per la Lotta contro i Tumori*.

In the course of these decades of fruitful and intense activity, your association has been distinguished by its special achievements in the areas of information, health education, prevention, nursing and research. Thanks to your generous contribution, many people suffering from a tumour can look with hope to their future. The spirit that motivates you belongs to that great process of humanization which we can aptly describe as the path of the "*civilization of love*" (cf. *Salvifici doloris*, n. 30).

2. As we face the tumours that threaten human health, we are tempted to assume a despairing or fatalistic attitude that depresses the sick person and makes treatment more difficult. Therefore your association appropriately tries to prepare the patient to receive the initial prognosis calmly and to face it with realism, relying confidently on the resources of the human organism and of medical research.

Let us thank the Lord because science is making great progress in the prevention and the fight against cancer. In this area, however, and in all experimentation that involves the person, everyone must work to ensure that experiments are carried out with full respect for human dignity. Scientific research will then be a wonderful benefit for many families and for all humanity.

Together with research into the origins of tumours, you also apply yourselves to the treatment of pain. This is a most opportune field of research because, by improving the quality of life of those who are afflicted by the disease, it offers them the possibility of effective alleviation and human support.

3. The world of suffering and pain is vast and complex. Yet it can be for the human being an opportunity for spiritual growth, opening up horizons beyond the confines of a precarious physical condition. When he is properly supported, the sick person, although aware of his own physical frailty, is often led to discover a dimension that goes beyond his own corporeity.

This is why, in the medical and nursing care of patients, as well as on the boundaries of research, it is important always to keep in mind the centrality of the person, regardless of race or religion. We must bend over every sick person with loving care, following the example of the *Good Samaritan*.

We must never lose sight of the finality of the true good of the person; we must never yield to the temptation of a medicine and scientific progress that are without norms and values, that could be transformed into a dangerous form of "technological control" over life.

4. Dear brothers and sisters, in such an important field, it would be unacceptable for believers and people of goodwill not to make their voice heard. In fact, it is only right that society and all those who in a variety of ways are responsible for it understand the urgent need to allocate funds for research for such beneficial causes as the fight against cancer and support concretely initiatives that serve to improve people's health.

Dear members of the *Lega Italiana per la Lotta contro i Tumori*, pursue your activity with steady dedication. It can help inspire in public opinion a greater sense of solidarity with those who are suffering, and encourage the quest for a proper balance between health, economics and society.

I gladly entrust you, together with your projects, to the Immaculate Mother of God, *Seat of Wisdom*. As I assure you of my prayer for the sick and for their families, I wholeheartedly impart a special Apostolic Blessing to you, to your dear ones, to the many volunteers and to all those you help in your daily commitment.