



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE LEADERS AND MEMBERS
OF THE CIRCOLO SAN PIETRO**

Friday, 10 May 2002

Dear Leaders and Members of the Circolo San Pietro,

1. Welcome to this encounter that every year helps me to know you better and to appreciate the attentive, caring work you perform. I greet each of you cordially and, through you, the members who are unable to be present. I greet your families, who share the generous involvement of the laudable "Circolo San Pietro".

I welcome your General President, Dr Marcello Sacchetti, and I thank him for his courteous words describing the ideals that guide you and the activities of the Association. His words have shown everyone the actual extent and quality of your liturgical and charitable dedication, as well as your ability to deal with the needs of your brethren with creative love.

I greet fraternally your chaplain, Archbishop Ettore Cunial, and the priests who dedicate themselves to your ongoing Christian formation.

2. *"When you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret"* (Mt 6,3-4).

Jesus' words, reported by the Evangelist St Matthew, inspire the style and programme of your association, which, for more than a century, has rendered an effective social and apostolic service. It is a service that is perhaps not well known to the communications media, but it constitutes a reliable and welcoming source of support for those who, lonely and forsaken, find themselves facing hardship and serious health problems.

Your president has just recalled that like Christ, you have opted to consider as "the first", namely, the object of primary attention and loving service, the ones whom the world and the logic of profit consider the "last", propelling them to the fringes of our opulent society.

With this spirit of charity you continue your century long activities and set up new ones such as the Nursing Home for the therapy of pain relief.

In all these positive initiatives you can count on the availability and sacrifices of the members of your association, who, following the image of the Good Samaritan, reach out to their brothers and sisters who are injured in body and in spirit, to bring them, besides material help, the comfort of a word of hope and a gesture of fraternal charity.

3. In your many activities always take the time to listen to the Word of God; may the Gospel be the *manual* where you learn love for the poor! In the face of the forms of new paganism that attract so many people, I hope that your discreet and active charity, nourished by intense prayer, will be an eloquent sign of God's tenderness for every human being.

In carrying out your important charitable activity, you intend to witness to the Pope's concern for those in need. The "Circolo San Pietro", in a certain sense, is an extension of his "charitable hand" to those who are the poorest and the most neglected. Your mission also includes the collection of "Peter's Pence" in Rome on the Day of the Pope's Charities; it was entrusted to your association by ancient privilege. At this meeting, you have presented me with the results of this collection. I am grateful to you for this generous and important act.

May the Virgin Mary go with you and protect each one of you and your families, especially during this month of May that is dedicated to her.

I am also close to you with prayer and I impart to each of you, to your families and to the poor whom you lovingly assist a heartfelt Apostolic Blessing.