



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
TO BISHOP SERGIO GORETTI OF ASSISI
ON THE OCCASION OF THE PEACE MARCH
FROM PERUGIA TO THE ROCCA OF ASSISI**

*To my Venerable Brother Bishop Sergio Goretti of Assisi*¹. I am pleased to address a cordial greeting to you and through you, Venerable Brother, to all the participants in the march for peace that is setting out from Perugia and will end in Assisi. In this city, in 1986, I invited the leaders of various religions to an important meeting. Today, as then, I have before my eyes the broad vision of the prophet: all the peoples converging from various points of the earth to gather round God as one great family (cf. Is 2: 2-5). It was the dream of hope that inspired my Venerable Predecessor, Bl. John XXIII, to write *Pacem in Terris*, whose 40th anniversary we are celebrating this year, and which this peace march seeks to commemorate.² Perhaps it should be recognized that in recent years not much has been invested in defending peace; indeed, at times, preference is given to allocating huge sums for purchasing weapons. It was as if they were "throwing peace to the winds". Many hopes were dampened. The daily news bulletins remind us that wars are continuing to poison people's lives, especially in the poorest countries. For example, how can we forget the long drawn-out violence that is causing blood to flow in the Middle East and in the Holy Land in particular? How can we remain indifferent to the ever broader panorama of conflicts that are involving various parts of earth? What can we do? Despite the difficulties, we must not lose heart. It is everyone's duty to continue to work for peace and to be peacemakers. Peace is a good for all. Every person is called to be a peacemaker in truth and in love.³ This year the theme chosen for the march is: "*Together let us build a Europe for peace*". I congratulate the organizers and those taking part in this praiseworthy event for juxtaposing *Europe and peace* as two complementary dimensions. We could say that they provide mutual support: one recalls the other. As a young man, I was able to see from personal experience the tragedy of a Europe without peace. This has driven me to work even more tirelessly to enable Europe to rediscover solidarity in peace and to become an artisan of peace for the other Continents, within and beyond its own frontiers. I am convinced that this mission's full strength and urgency needs to be rediscovered. The European Continent, drawing on its noble spiritual traditions, must generously expend its rich cultural patrimony that has matured in the light of Christ's Gospel for the benefit of all humanity. This is the hope I entrust to the motherly intercession of Mary, Queen of Peace, and of St Francis, prophet of peace. With these sentiments, I send to you and to all who are taking part in this genuine peace initiative my Blessing. *From the Vatican, 11 October 2003*

JOHN PAUL II
