



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
ON THE OCCASION OF THE ASSEMBLY
OF THE ITALIAN FEDERATION OF CATHOLIC WEEKLIES**

Friday, 3 December 2004

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. I am pleased to welcome you on the occasion of the Assembly of the Italian Federation of Catholic Weeklies, held every three years. I cordially greet all of you, representing approximately 150 diocesan newspapers, and your collaborators, and I extend my cordial thoughts to all your readers. In particular, I greet your President, Mons. Vincenzo Rini, and I thank him for his words on your behalf.

2. Thanks be to God, Italy has a rich tradition of Catholic weeklies with outstanding priests and lay people who have marked their history. Among them I would like to recall Mons. Andrea Spada, well-known to you, who died a few days ago. The contribution of Catholic journalists is also especially valuable today on the pastoral as well as the cultural and social levels.

Their service primarily offers information on the life of the Church, supported by the appropriate documentation and an analysis of ecclesial initiatives and their content. Then, in view of their wide local distribution, diocesan weeklies effectively help to spread in families, parishes and cities the Christian values that account for a large part of the spiritual heritage of the Italian People. I am thinking in particular of the protection of every dimension of human life, as well as of marriage and the family, which a misunderstood culture of "personal rights" is tending to distort, and lastly, of the values of truth, justice and solidarity.

3. Dear brothers and sisters, thank you for your service that, with your journalistic articles, contributes to the building of the "civilization of love". In this age of global communications, your mission is becoming more and more difficult. Do not lose heart, dear friends, because of the

difficulties you encounter. Conscientiously persevere in preaching the Gospel of truth and hope from the special "pulpits" of your diocesan weeklies, remaining ever open to the wide horizons of the universal Church.

4. To be able to carry out this mission of yours fully, take pains to ensure that you are not the first to lack the indispensable spiritual nourishment of prayer and an intense sacramental life. In addition, be concerned to enrich your ethical and cultural training so as to keep your convictions in tune with the Gospel, and do not let yourselves be led astray by the harmful trends that dominate a particular aspect of modern culture.

May the Immaculate Virgin protect you; may St Francis Xavier, Patron of the Missions, whose liturgical memorial occurs today, intercede for you. I assure you of my remembrance in prayer and to you all, together with your loved ones, I wholeheartedly impart the Apostolic Blessing.