



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO STAFF AND PATIENTS
AT "BAMBINO GESÙ CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL"**

Gianicolo Hill, Rome

Friday, 30 September 2005

*Hospital Administrators and Distinguished Authorities,
Dear Children,*

At the end of my Visit, I am glad to speak to you and to thank you for your warm welcome. I am grateful to the President of the "Bambino Gesù" Paediatric Hospital for his words on behalf of you all, words of faith and true Christian charity. I greet the Presidents of the Region and of the Province, the Mayor of Rome and the other Authorities gathered here.

My gratitude then goes to the Administrators, Directors and Coordinators of the Hospital Wards, and to the doctors, nurses and all the personnel. I address you in particular with affection, dear children, as well as your relatives who are beside you to care for you. My heartfelt thanks go to your representative who has paid me a kind tribute on behalf of the entire family of the "Bambino Gesù". I am close to each one of you and want to make you feel God's comfort and blessing. I would like to express these same wishes to those in the branches of this hospital at Palidor and Santa Marinella, who are equally close to me.

I chose the "Bambino Gesù" for my first Visit to a hospital for two reasons: first of all, because this Institution belongs to the Holy See and is caringly watched over by the Cardinal Secretary of State, who is present here. Passing through several wards, meeting so many suffering little ones, I thought naturally of Jesus who loved children tenderly and wanted them to be allowed to go to him. Yes, like Jesus, the Church too expresses a special fondness for children, particularly when they are suffering.

And this is the second reason why I have come to see you: to witness personally to Jesus' love for children, a love that wells up spontaneously from the heart and that the Christian spirit nurtures and strengthens. The Lord said: "As often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me" (cf. Mt 25: 40, 45). In every suffering person, especially if he or she is little and defenceless, it is Jesus who welcomes us and is expecting our love.

Consequently, dear friends, the work you do is important. I am thinking of the advanced surgery that has made the "Bambino Gesù" famous. But I am also thinking above all of the ordinary everyday work: of the welcome, hospitalization and painstaking care provided to the small patients - and there are so many of them! - who have recourse to your health-care structures. This requires great availability and a constant effort to increase the available resources; it demands attention, a spirit of sacrifice, patience and disinterested love to ensure that parents find here a place where they can breathe hope and serenity, even in moments of the most acute anxiety.

Permit me to say another word precisely about the welcome and care that is given to those who are sick. Here you are concerned to guarantee excellent treatment, not only from the medical but also from the human point of view. You seek to give a family to the patients and those who are with them, and this requires a contribution from all: the directors, doctors, nurses and staff in the various wards, the personnel, and the many praiseworthy Organizations of volunteers who daily offer their precious service.

This approach, which is effective for every clinic, must be a special feature of those inspired by Gospel principles. For children, then, no resources should be spared. May every project and programme, therefore, always be centred on the good of the sick, the good of the sick child.

Dear friends, thank you for your collaboration in this work of great human value that is also an especially effective apostolate. I pray for you, knowing that this mission of yours is far from easy. However, I am convinced that everything will be easier if, in devoting your energy to all your little guests, you are able to recognize in their faces the face of Christ.

When I went to pray in the chapel I met the priests, women religious and all those who accompany your work with their dedication, assuring in particular an appropriate spiritual animation. May the Church herself be the heart of the Hospital: draw from Jesus, truly present in the Eucharist, from the sweet Doctor of body and soul, the spiritual strength to comfort and care for all who are hospitalized here.

Lastly, as Bishop of Rome, may I be permitted to make a supremely pastoral reflection. The "Bambino Gesù" Hospital, in addition to being an institution of the Holy See that directly provides practical help for sick children, is an outpost of the Christian Community's evangelizing activity in our City. Here a practical and effective Gospel witness can be offered in contact with suffering humanity; here, the power of Christ, who with his spirit heals and transforms human existence, is

proclaimed through deeds.

Let us pray that together with their treatment, the love of Jesus may be communicated to the little ones. *May Mary Most Holy, Salus infirmorum* - Health of the sick, whom we feel yet closer as Mother of the Child Jesus and of all children, protect you, dear sick children, and your families, the administrators, the doctors and the entire Hospital Community. I impart my Apostolic Blessing with affection to you all.

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