



The Holy See

BLESSING OF THE RECENTLY RESTORED STATUE
OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY OF "MONTE MARIO" IN ROME
AND VISIT TO THE DOMINICAN MONASTERY OF "SANTA MARIA DEL ROSARIO"

BLESSING AND INAUGURATION OF THE STATUE
OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY OF "MONTE MARIO",
RECENTLY RESTORED

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

*Monte Mario - Rome
Thursday, 24 June 2010*

(Video)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In the first place, I would like to greet warmly all of you gathered here today for this important event. The majestic statue of Our Lady, knocked down some months ago by a violent wind, has returned to this hill to keep watch over our City. I greet first of all the Cardinal Vicar Agostino Vallini, and the other Bishops present. I address a special thought to Fr Flavio Peloso, re-elected as head of the *Opera Don Orione*, and I thank him for his kind words. I extend this greeting to the religious taking part in their 13th General Chapter, to those who work in this Institution at the service of the young and the suffering and to the whole spiritual Family of Don Orione. I address my respectful thought to Hon. Mr Gianni Alemanno, Mayor of Rome today is his name day. I would like to express to you in advance my appreciation of the Concert which the *Campidoglio* will be offering me on the evening of 29 June; this gesture testifies to the affection for the Pope of the entire City of Rome. I also greet the other Civil and Military Authorities. Lastly, I cannot but offer my heartfelt thanks to all who have contributed in various ways to restoring the statue of Our Lady to its original splendour.

I gladly accepted the invitation to join you in paying homage to Mary, "*Salus populi romani*", portrayed in this marvellous statue so dear to the Roman people. The statue is a memorial of dramatic and providential events, written in history and in the consciousness of the City. Indeed, it was set upon the hill of Monte Mario in 1953 to fulfil the vow that the people made during the Second World War when the hostilities and weapons gave rise to fear for Rome's fate. Then Don Orione's Roman institutions had the idea to collect signatures for a vow to Our Lady. More than a million citizens supported it. Venerable [Pius XII](#) welcomed the devout initiative of the people that entrusted itself to Mary and the vow was made on 4 June 1944, in front of the image of Our Lady of Divine Love. The peaceful liberation of Rome occurred that same day. How can I fail to renew with you today too, dear friends of Rome, that gesture of devotion to Mary: "*Salus populi romani*", by blessing this beautiful statue?

Don Orione's followers wanted a large statue and they had it set high up, overlooking the city, to pay homage to the outstanding holiness of the Mother of God who, humble on earth, "was exalted above the choirs of angels in celestial realms" as Pope Gregory VII said (Gregory VII, *To Adelaide of Hungary*) as well as to have a sign of her familiar presence in their daily lives. May Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, the lovable consoler of your souls, the sure guide of your will, the support of your footsteps, and a persuasive inspirer of the imitation of Jesus Christ, always come first in your thoughts and affections. In the act of looking down from on high upon the places of family, civil and religious life in Rome, may the "*Madonnina*" as the Romans like to call her protect families, inspire good resolutions and suggest to all the wish for Heaven. "Look down from Heaven, pray, then go ahead courageously and work. Hail Mary and on we go!", urged St Luigi Orione.

In their vow to Our Lady, as well as promising prayers and devotion, the Romans also committed themselves to works of charity. For their part, even before the statue was set up, Don Orione's followers were taking crippled children and orphans into this Centre on Monte Mario. St Luigi Orione's programme "*Charity alone will save the world*" was expressed in an important way here and, together with the *Madonnina* set upon the hill, became a sign of hope for Rome. Dear brothers and sisters, spiritual heirs of Luigi Orione, the Saint of Charity! The theme of the General Chapter that has just ended consists of this motto, dear to your Founder: "*Charity alone will save the world*". I bless the resolutions and decisions that have been made to relaunch that spiritual and apostolic dynamism which must always distinguish you.

Don Orione lived with clear sight and enthusiasm the Church's duty to live love in order to let God's light enter the world (cf. [Deus Caritas Est](#), n. 39). He bequeathed this mission to his disciples as their spiritual and apostolic way, convinced that "charity opens eyes to faith and warms hearts with love for God". Continue, dear Sons of Divine Providence, on this charismatic path that he began because, as he said: "charity is the best apology for the Catholic faith", "charity attracts, charity moves people, leading to faith and hope" (*Verballi*, 26 November 1930, p. 95). Works of charity, both in the form of personal actions and as services to the weak that are offered

in large institutions, can never be reduced to philanthropic gestures, but must always remain tangible expressions of God's providential love. To do this, Don Orione recalls, "It is necessary to be kneaded by the sweetest charity of Our Lord" (*Writings* 70, 231) through an authentic and holy life. Only in this way is it possible to pass from works of charity to charity in works, because, your Founder added, "works without God's charity that gives them value in his eyes, are worth nothing" (To the PSMC, 19 June 1920, p. 141).

Dear brothers and sisters, thank you once again for your invitation and for your welcome. May you be accompanied every day by the motherly protection of Mary; let us invoke her together for all who work at this Centre and for the whole population of Rome and, as I assure my remembrance in prayer to each and every one, I bless you all with affection.

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