



# The Holy See

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## ***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI TO THE SAINTS PETER AND PAUL ASSOCIATION***

*Altar of the Chair, St Peter's Basilica  
Saturday, 25 June 2011*

*Dear Friends of the Association of Saints Peter and Paul,*

I greet you all with joy and affection! I am glad to meet you while you are gathered together on the occasion of the Sodality's 40th anniversary: a happy event, which is an invitation to give thanks to the Lord first of all and to the beloved Servant of God Paul vi, who did so much to renew the Vatican milieu in accordance with contemporary needs.

I greet in particular Dr Calvino Gasparini, the President, and I thank him for his courteous words; I greet Mons. Joseph Murphy, the Chaplain, the other people in charge and all the members, as well as the former chaplains, including Cardinal Coppa who has honoured us with his presence, and Cardinal Bertone who, as a young priest, helped with the formation of the then Palatine Guard.

At the Altar of the Lord and the Tomb of St Peter, let us remember especially at this moment all those who in the past 40 years have succeeded one another at the helm of the Association and were dedicated members. May the Lord grant those who have departed this world the peace and beatitude of his Kingdom.

In meeting you, the sentiment of gratitude is also uppermost in my mind and is addressed to you for the service you offer, and especially for the love and the spirit of faith in which you carry it out. You devote some of your time, combining it with your family commitments and often depriving yourselves of leisure time, to coming to the Vatican to help keep order at the celebrations. Moreover, you give life to numerous charitable projects, in collaboration with the Sisters Daughters of Charity and with the Missionaries of Charity.

These commitments demand a profound motivation which should always be renewed by an intense spiritual life. If you are to help others to pray, your own hearts must be oriented to God; to appeal to them to show respect for holy places and holy things, it is necessary to possess a Christian sense of sacredness; we must have a humble soul and a gaze of faith. Your attitude, often without words, is an indication, an example and an appeal, and as such has educational value.

Of course, your personal formation entails all this and I want to tell you that for this very reason, as well as for all that you do, I am particularly grateful. Like every authentic ecclesial association the Saints Peter and Paul Association aims first of all, never to form its members instead of or as an alternative to parishes but always in a complementary way.

I am therefore glad that you are well integrated in your parishes, and that you teach your children a sense of the parish. At the same time, I am pleased that the Association is properly demanding in providing specific formation periods for those who wish to become effective members, and that it offers appropriate moments to regularly sustain their perseverance.

I address a special thought to those who made their solemn promise of fidelity this morning. I hope that they will always have the joy of feeling like disciples of Christ in the Church and I urge them to give a good Gospel witness in every area of their life. In this perspective too, from the outset I supported the project of establishing a youth group. I greet the young people with special affection and I encourage them to follow the example of Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati, loving God with all their heart, savouring the beauty of Christian friendship and serving Christ with great discretion in our poorest brothers and sisters.

Dear friends, I also thank you for your congratulations and, especially, for your prayers on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of my ordination to the priesthood. The gift you have wished to offer me, a beautiful chasuble, reminds me that I am always primarily a priest of Christ, and at the same time it invites me to remember you when I celebrate the redeeming Sacrifice. I warmly thank you!

Lastly, I would like to entrust you all to the Virgin Mary. I know that in your Association she is venerated with the title *Virgo Fidelis* [faithful Virgin]. Today we are more in need of fidelity than ever! We live in a society that has lost this value. The attitude to change, “mobility”, “flexibility”, is lauded for economic and organizational reasons that are also legitimate.

Yet the quality of a human relationship can be measured by fidelity! Sacred Scripture shows us that God is faithful. With his grace and with Mary’s help may you therefore be faithful to Christ and to the Church, ready with humility and patience to pay the price that this entails.

May the *Virgo Fidelis* obtain for you peace in your families and also that authentic Christian

vocations be born within them to marriage, to the priesthood, and to the consecrated life. For this I assure you of my special remembrance in prayer, while I cordially bless all of you and your loved ones.