



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT

OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

TO SAVONA AND GENOA (LIGURIA) MEETING WITH THE MEMBERS

OF THE CATHEDRAL CHAPTER AND CONSECRATED RELIGIOUS ADDRESS OF HIS

HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI St Lawrence Cathedral, Genoa

Sunday, 18 May 2008 *Your Eminences,*

Dear Members of the Cathedral Chapter,

Dear Men and Women Religious, In this brief but intense Pastoral Visit to Genoa I could not omit a visit to your famous Cathedral, dedicated to St Lawrence, which preserves the relics of St John the Baptist, the Precursor of Jesus. I am happy to meet the Canons of the venerable Metropolitan Chapter and the men and women Religious present and working in the Archdiocese. This church, surrounded by a network of alleys, seems to be the point of convergence and arrival of every path as though people desired to come out from the shade of the narrow streets into the light of their Cathedral, as if they wanted to come out into the light of God that welcomes, embraces, illumines and restores all. I offer my cordial greeting to each one of you. I address a special greeting to Mons. Mario Grone, Head of the Cathedral Chapter, and Fr Domenico Rossi, Diocesan Delegate for Consecrated Life who have expressed your devout sentiments. In past centuries, the Church of Genoa had a rich tradition of holiness and generous service to the brethren, thanks to the work of zealous priests and men and women religious of both active and contemplative life. Here the names of various Saints and Blesseds spring to mind: Antonio Maria Gianelli, Agostino Roscelli, Tommaso Reggio, Francesco Maria da Camporosso, Caterina Fieschi Adorno, Virginia Centurione Bracelli, Paola Frassinetti, Eugenia Ravasco, Maria Repetto, Benedetta Cambiagio Frassinello. But even now, notwithstanding the difficulties that society is going through, the enthusiasm for evangelization is strong in your communities. What has grown in particular is the common desire to have closer relations of ever more brotherly understanding in order to collaborate in the missionary action promoted throughout the Archdiocese. In fact, in compliance with the guidelines of the Italian Bishops' Conference, you wish to adopt an ongoing state of mission as a testimony of the joy of the Gospel and an explicit invitation to encounter Jesus Christ that is addressed to all. Here I am among you, dear friends, to encourage you to walk in this direction. In particular, I would like to point out to you as an example the Apostle Paul, whose special Jubilee we are preparing to celebrate on the occasion of the 2,000th anniversary of his birth. After his conversion to Christ on the road to Damascus he dedicated himself without reserve to the Gospel cause. For Christ he

faced trials of all kinds and stayed faithful to him until the sacrifice of his life. Having come to the end of his earthly pilgrimage, he wrote to Timothy his faithful disciple: "For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (II Tim 4: 6-7). May each one of us, dear brothers and sisters, be able to say the same thing on the last day of his/her own life. In order for this to happen, and it is what the Lord expects of his friends, we must cultivate the same missionary spirit that animated St Paul with constant spiritual, ascetic and pastoral formation. Above all, we must become "specialists" in listening to God and credible examples of a holiness that is expressed in fidelity to the Gospel without yielding to the spirit of the world. As Cardinal Giuseppe Siri, a zealous Pastor of this Archdiocese for several decades and now buried in this Cathedral of yours, wrote: "Religious life pivots around God and arranges all things around God and thus becomes a witness of God and the call of God" (*Letter to all the Women Religious Praying and Working in the Diocese of Genoa on the Congress on: "Worship of the Lord"*, 15 August 1953). Dear Members of the Chapter of Canons of the Cathedral, in attending to the liturgies which take place here, may you remember that everything in us is invigorated by personal and liturgical prayer. Once again it was Cardinal Siri who stressed that "the most venerable and holiest action, worthy of all consideration and regard, of all honour and distinction which is carried out in a diocese is the solemn celebration of the Divine Office, in other words what you do.... The entire Diocese, and in a certain sense the entire Church, prays through your lips. The debt of the diocesan family of the faithful is discharged before God primarily with this prayer of yours" (*Towards the Congress on "Worship of the Lord", Pastoral Letter to the Canons*, 24 January 1953). Dear brothers and sisters and in particular you Consecrated People, I thank you for your presence. It is a presence old and ever new, despite your dwindling numbers and strength. But be confident: our times are not those of God and of his Providence. It is necessary to pray and to increase in personal and community holiness. The Lord provides. I ask you never to consider yourselves as though you were in the "twilight" of life: Christ is the eternal dawn, our light. I ask you to persevere in your institutions and especially in your presence: the death of your communities impoverishes you but also Genoa. The poor, the sick, families, children, our Parishes: all this forms a valuable context for service and gift in order to build the Church and serve humankind. I especially recommend to you the education of children and young people: you know that it is the educational challenge which is most urgent because without an authentic human education it is impossible to go far. And all of you, although in different ways, have had an educational experience in the past. We must help parents in their extraordinary and difficult educational task; we must help Parishes and groups; we must continue even with great sacrifices, Catholic schools which are a great treasure of the Christian community and a true resource for the Country. Dear Canons and dear men and women Religious, the long spiritual tradition of Genoa includes six Popes, among whom I remember above all Benedict XV of venerable memory, the Pope of peace.

In *Humani Generis Redemptionem* he wrote, "What gives a man's words life and vigour and makes them promote wonderfully the salvation of souls is divine grace" [n. 17]. Let us never forget it: being called to proclaim together the joy of Christ and the beauty of the Church is what binds us. This joy and this beauty, which come from the Spirit, are a gift and a sign of God's presence in our

souls. In order to be witnesses and heralds of the saving message we cannot rely solely on our human forces. It is God's own fidelity that encourages and shapes fidelity to him: for this reason let us be guided by the Spirit of truth and love. This is the invitation that I address to each one of you, corroborating it with a special remembrance in prayer. I entrust you all to the Madonna della Guardia, to St Lawrence, to St John the Baptist and to your Patron Saints. With these sentiments I bless you wholeheartedly.

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