



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO AQUILEIA AND VENICE

MEETING WITH THE FAITHFUL

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

St Mark's Square in Venice

Saturday, 7 May 2011

(Video)

*Dear Cardinal Patriarch,
Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,
Mr Mayor and Distinguished Authorities,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I address a cordial greeting to each of you who have come to this quay, from the “calli” and “campi” [alleyways and squares] of this marvellous city, to express your affection to the Successor of Peter, who is here on pilgrimage to the land of St Mark. Your presence, accompanied by vibrant enthusiasm, expresses your faith and devotion, and in my opinion this is a reason for great joy. In particular, I thank the Mayor for the noble words he has addressed to me on behalf of the whole city and for the sentiments he has expressed to me; together with him, I greet and thank the Civil and Military Authorities who have come to welcome me.

Today I have the joy of being able to meet the people of this Lagoon. I have come to you to renew the profound link of communion which historically unites you with the Bishop of Rome and whose primary witnesses are the venerable Pastors who left this Patriarchal See for that of St Peter: many of you have kept a vivid memory of Patriarch Albino Luciani, a son of these Venetian regions, who became Pope with the name of John Paul I. How can one forget Patriarch Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, who, having become Pope John XXIII, has been raised by the Church to the

honours of the altar and proclaimed Blessed? Lastly, let us remember Patriarch Giuseppe Sarto, the future St [Pius X](#), who continues to enliven this particular Church and the whole universal Church with his example of holiness. The Pastoral Visits made by the Servant of God [Paul VI](#) and by [Bl. John Paul II](#) are a further testimony of the Popes' pastoral care for your city. In the footsteps of my Predecessors, I too wished to be with you today to bring you a word of love and hope, and to strengthen you in the faith of the Church, which the Lord Jesus chose to found on the rock which was Peter and which he entrusted to the guidance of the Apostles and their successors in communion with the Church of Rome "which presides in charity" (St Ignatius).

Dear friends, in accordance with the Venetian traditions you have wished to welcome me in this evocative place which is, as it were, the gate to the heart of the city. From here one's gaze embraces the serene basin of St Mark, the elegant Ducal Palace, the marvellous structure of Basilica di San Marco, the unmistakable profile of the city, rightly known as "the pearl of the Adriatic". From here one can appreciate the aspect of rare openness that has always characterized Venice, a crossroads of people and communities of all origins, cultures, languages and religions. As a landing and meeting place for human beings from all continents, due to its beauty, its history, its civil traditions, for centuries this city has responded to the special vocation of being a bridge between East and West.

In our day too, with its new perspectives and their complex challenges, Venice is called to take on important responsibilities with regard to a culture of hospitality and sharing in order to build bridges of dialogue between peoples and nations; a culture of harmony and love which has its solid foundations in the Gospel.

The splendour of its monuments and the reputation of its age-old institutions testify to its glorious history and the character of the Venetian people, honest and hard-working, endowed with great sensitivity, with organizational ability and with what in today's parlance is called "common sense". This patrimony of civil, cultural and artistic traditions found fertile development thanks to its acceptance of the Christian faith, which is rooted in the very distant past, already from the time of the foundation of the first settlements on this lagoon. As the centuries passed, the faith transmitted by the first evangelizers became ever more deeply rooted in the social fabric, thus becoming an essential part of it. Visible evidence of this are the splendid churches and the many devotional aedicules along the streets, canals and bridges.

I would like in particular to recall the two important Shrines which, at different times, were built by the Venetians in compliance with a vow in order to obtain from divine Providence deliverance from the scourge of the plague: there they stand opposite this quay, the Basilica of the Redeemer and the Shrine of the Madonna della Salute, both destinations of numerous pilgrims on their respective anniversaries. Your ancestors knew well that human life is in the hands of God and that without his blessing man builds in vain. Therefore, as I visit your city, I ask the Lord to give you all a sincere and fruitful faith that is capable of nurturing great hope and a patient quest for the common good.

Dear friends, my prayer rises to God to implore him to pour out his blessings on Venice and its territory. I invite you all, dear Venetians, always to seek and to preserve harmony between the eyes of faith and reason, which enables the conscience to perceive the true good, so that the decisions of the civil community may always be inspired by ethical principles that correspond to the deep truth of human nature. Man cannot renounce the truth about himself without his sense of personal responsibility, solidarity with others and honesty in economic and working relations, suffering.

While in the evening of this day we are entering the Sunday feast, let us prepare ourselves to celebrate the weekly Easter of the Lord with the joy that characterizes the Easter Season and with the certainty that Jesus conquered death with his Resurrection and wants to make us share in his own life. As I entrust you to the maternal protection of Mary Most Holy, I invoke the Lord's Blessing upon this city, upon those who live in it, upon those who govern it and upon those who do their utmost to make it ever more worthy of God and of man. Thank you all and have a nice Sunday.

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