



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO THE ARCHDIOCESE OF MILAN

AND 7th WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES

(1-3 JUNE 2012)

MEETING WITH THE CITIZENS

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI

Duomo Square, Milan

Friday, 1st June 2012

[Video]

*Mr Mayor,
Distinguished Authorities,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and Priesthood,
Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Archdiocese of Milan,*

I cordially greet all of you gathered here in such large numbers, as well as those who are following this event via radio and television. Thank you for your warm welcome! I thank the Mayor for his kind words of welcome on behalf of the civil community. I respectfully greet the Government Representatives, the President of the Region, the President of the Province, and the other representatives of civil and military Institutions, and express my appreciation of their collaboration in all the various events of this Visit. And thank you, Your Eminence, for your cordial greeting!

I am very happy to be among you today and I thank God for offering me the opportunity to visit your beautiful city. My first encounter with the Milanese is taking place in the Piazza del Duomo, the heart of Milan, where the imposing symbol of this city stands. With its forest of steeples it calls us to raise our gaze to God. This soaring to the heavens has always characterized Milan and has enabled it over time to respond fruitfully to its vocation: to be a crossroads — a *Mediolanum* — of

peoples and cultures. The city has wisely succeeded in combining pride in its identity with the ability to welcome every positive contribution which has been offered to it in the course of history. Still today, Milan is called to rediscover its positive role as a herald of peace and development for the whole of Italy.

My warm thanks go once again to the Pastor of this Diocese, Cardinal Angelo Scola, for his welcome and for his words to me on behalf of the entire diocesan Community; with him I greet the Auxiliary Bishops and those who preceded him on this great and ancient Cathedra, Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi and Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini. I address a special greeting to the representatives of families — coming from all over the world — who are taking part in the Seventh World Meeting. My thoughts turn affectionately to those who are in need of help and comfort and are afflicted by various worries: to people who are lonely or in trouble, to the unemployed, the sick, those in prison, to the homeless and those who are without the means to live a dignified life. May none of these brothers and sisters lack the community's constant solidarity and concern.

In this regard, I appreciate all that the Archdiocese of Milan has done and continues to do in practice to meet the needs of families most severely hit by the economic and financial crisis; and for having taken immediate action, together with the entire Church and civil society in Italy, to help the people hit by the earthquake in Emilia Romagna, who are in our hearts and in our prayers. On their behalf, I once again invite you to show generous solidarity.

The Seventh World Meeting of Families offers me the opportunity to visit your city and to renew the strong and constant bonds that link the Ambrosian community to the Church of Rome and to the Successor of Peter. As is well known, St Ambrose came from a Roman family and always kept alive his ties with the Eternal City and with the Church of Rome, manifesting and praising the primacy of the Bishop who presided over her. "In Peter", he affirmed, "there is the foundation of the Church and the magisterium of discipline" (*De Virginitate*, 16, 105); and there is also his famous statement: "Where Peter is, there is the Church" (*Explanatio Psalm 40*, 30, 5). Ambrose's pastoral wisdom and teachings on the orthodoxy of the faith and on Christian life have made an indelible impression on the universal Church and, in particular, mark the Church of Milan, which has never ceased to cultivate his memory and to preserve his spirit. The Ambrosian Church, safeguarding the prerogatives of her rite and her own expression of the one faith, is called to live the full catholicity of the one Church, to witness to her and to contribute to her enrichment.

The profound sense of Church and the sincere warmth of communion with the Successor of Peter have been part of the wealth and identity of your Church throughout her journey and shine out in the great Pastors who have guided you. First of all, St Charles Borromeo, a son of your land. As the Servant of God Paul VI said, "he moulded the people's consciences and morals" (*Discourse to the Milanese*, 18 March, 1968); and he did so above all with his broad, tenacious and rigorous application of the Tridentine reforms, with his creation of institutions for renewal, starting with seminaries, and with his boundless pastoral charity, rooted in profound union with God,

accompanied by the exemplary austerity of his life. However, along with St Ambrose and St Charles, I wish to mention other excellent Pastors, closer to us, who with their holiness and their doctrine have adorned the Church of Milan: Bl. Cardinal Andrea Carlo Ferrari, an apostle of catechesis and of speakers and promoters of social renewal in the Christian sense; Bl. Alfredo Ildefonso Schuster, the “Cardinal of prayer”, a Pastor tireless to the point of totally consuming himself for his faithful. Further, I would like to recall two Archbishops of Milan who became Pontiffs: Achille Ratti, Pope Pius XI; it was his determination that was responsible for resolving the Roman Question and for constituting Vatican City State; and the good and wise Servant of God Giovanni Battista Montini, Paul VI, who was able, with an expert hand, to steer the Second Vatican Council and bring it to a successful conclusion. From the Ambrosian Church certain spiritual fruits have developed that are particularly important for our time. Among them all, I would like today, thinking precisely of the family, to mention St Gianna Beretta Molla, a wife and mother, a woman committed to ecclesial and civil life who made the beauty and joy of faith, hope and charity resplendent.

Dear friends, your history is very rich in culture and faith. Such wealth has inspired the art, music, literature, culture, industry, politics and initiatives of solidarity of Milan and of the whole Archdiocese. It is now up to you, heirs of a glorious past and a spiritual patrimony of inestimable value: commit yourselves to passing on to the future generations the torch of this brilliant tradition. You know well how urgent it is to insert the Gospel leaven into today’s cultural context. Faith in Jesus Christ, who died and rose for us and is alive in our midst, must revive the whole fabric of personal and communal, public and private life, so as to enable a permanent and authentic “well being”, starting with the family, which must be rediscovered as the principal patrimony of mankind, a coefficient and the sign of a true and enduring culture in favour of the human being. The unique identity of Milan must not isolate or separate it, closing in on itself. On the contrary, keeping the sap in its roots and the characteristic traits of its history, it is called to look to the future with hope, cultivating an intimate and dynamic link with the life of all Italy and of Europe. In the clear distinction between roles and aims, a positively “secular” Milan and the Milan of faith are called to coordinate for the common good.

Dear brothers and sisters, thank you again for your welcome! I entrust you to the protection of the Virgin Mary, who from the highest spire of the Cathedral keeps motherly watch over this city, day and night. To all of you, whom I hold in a great embrace, I impart my affectionate blessing. Thank you!