



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE DIOCESES OF CESENA AND BOLOGNA

*St Peter's Square
Saturday, 21 April 2018*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I greet you all with affection. Thank you for your very festive presence! With this visit to the Tomb of Peter you reciprocate the one that I made to your Diocesan Communities [last October first](#). I am very grateful to you for this.

I greet Archbishop Matteo Zuppi of Bologna and Bishop Douglas Regattieri of Cesena-Sarsina. I thank you, dear brothers, for your words which rekindle my memories of that day. I offer my welcome to the civil authorities present here, as well as to the priests, to consecrated people and to the lay faithful, with a special thought for all those who join spiritually in this pilgrimage, in particular the sick and the suffering.

I cherish vivid memories of the encounters that I experienced in your cities. I have not forgotten the welcome that you gave me and the moments of faith and of prayer that we shared, in which the faithful from every part of your respective Dioceses took part. It was a gift of Providence in order to confirm and strengthen the sense of faith and belonging to the Church, which necessarily seeks to be translated into attitudes and gestures of charity, especially toward the most fragile people. Your Bishops have emphasized how my pastoral visit was a reason for renewed commitment on the part of all the members of your Communities. I thank God for this and I encourage you to continue with courage on this journey you have undertaken.

In the city of Cesena we commemorated the third centenary of the birth of Pope [Pius VI](#), with a thought for [Pius VII](#) as well. The memory of these two Bishops of Rome, both from Cesena,

constituted for you who belong to that Diocesan Community a propitious occasion to reflect on the journey of evangelization undertaken up to today and on the new missionary aims that await you. As heirs to these and other important figures of pastors and evangelizers, you are called to continue on this path, generously committing yourselves to proclaiming the Gospel to your compatriots and witnessing to it with works, which do not necessarily have to be grand. Christians are a leaven of love, of fraternity, of hope through many little everyday gestures. May you love little everyday gestures. Little; they are small like leaven, little, but they do so much good.

The occasion of my visit to Bologna was offered, as you well know, by the conclusion of the Diocesan Eucharistic Congress. May the fervour that arose from that ecclesial event, which gathered numerous people around the Eucharistic Jesus, endure over time; may it not abate but grow and bear fruit, leaving an indelible imprint on the journey of faith of your Christian Community. As I recalled in my recent Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*, “sharing the word and celebrating the Eucharist together fosters fraternity and makes us a holy and missionary community” (n. 142). Indeed, the Eucharist makes up the Church, joins her and unites her in the bond of love and hope. The Lord Jesus established her so that we may abide in him and that we may form one body: from foreign and indifferent that we may become united to one another as brothers and sisters.

The Eucharist reconciles and unites us, because it nourishes the community relationship and encourages attitudes of generosity, of forgiveness, of trust in our neighbour, of gratitude. The Eucharist, which means “giving thanks”, enables us to perceive the need for thanksgiving: it helps us understand that “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35); it teaches us to give primacy to love and to practice justice in its complete form which is mercy; to know how to always thank, even when we receive what is owed us. Eucharistic worship also teaches us the right balance of values: not to put earthly realities in first place but heavenly goods; to hunger not only for material food, but also for that “which endures to eternal life” (Jn 6:27).

Dear brothers and sisters, the men and women of our time need to encounter Jesus Christ: he is the path that leads to the Father; he is the Gospel of the hope and love that enable us to push on, up to the gift of self. Here is our mission, which is at the same time responsibility and joy, legacy of salvation and gift to be shared. It requires generous willingness, self-sacrifice and trustful abandonment to divine will. It means following a path of holiness in order to respond with courage to Jesus’ call, each according to his or her own particular charism. “A Christian cannot think of his or her mission on earth without seeing it as a path of holiness, for ‘this is the will of God, your sanctification’ (1 Thess 4:3). Each saint is a mission, planned by the Father to reflect and embody, at a specific moment in history, a certain aspect of the Gospel” (*Gaudete et Exsultate*, n. 19).

I encourage you to make resonate in your communities the call to holiness which pertains to every baptized person and all conditions of life. The complete fulfillment of every aspiration of the human heart consists in holiness. It is a journey which begins at the baptismal font and leads to Heaven,

and is carried out day by day by accepting the Gospel in concrete life. With this task and with this missionary impulse aimed at restoring new impetus to the evangelization of your Dioceses, you will follow concretely the exhortations that I addressed to you during my visit. Never tire of seeking God and his Kingdom above all things and of committing yourselves to the service of our brothers and sisters, always in a style of simplicity and fraternity. The Virgin Mary, “the saint among the saints” is “blessed above all others. She teaches us the way of holiness and she walks ever at our side” (*ibid.*, n. 176); may she be the sure point of reference along your pastoral and missionary path.

I thank you again for this meeting. I ask you to please continue praying for me, and I impart my heartfelt Apostolic Blessing, which I extend to all those who comprise your Diocesan Communities. Thank you.