



The Holy See

GENERAL AUDIENCE OF JOHN PAUL II

Wednesday 16 October 2002

Signing Apostolic Letter, Year of the Rosary

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. During my recent trip to Poland, I prayed to Our Lady: "Most Holy Mother, ... obtain also for me strength in body and spirit, so that I may carry out to the end the mission given me by the Risen Lord. To you I give back all the fruits of my life and my ministry; to you I entrust the future of the Church ... in you do I trust and once more to you I declare: *Totus Tuus, Maria! Totus tuus. Amen*" (*Mass at Shrine of Kalwaria*, 19 August 2002, *ORE*, 21 August, p. 7).

Today I repeat the same words giving thanks to God for the twenty-four years of my service to the Church in the Chair of Peter. On this special day, I entrust anew into the hands of the Mother of God the life of the Church and that so sorely tried of humanity. To her I entrust my future. I put everything in her hands so that with a Mother's love she may present it to her Son, "for the praise of his glory" (Eph 1,12).

2. The centre of our faith is Christ, Redeemer of the human person. Mary does not detract from him nor does she detract from his saving work. Assumed into heaven in body and soul, the Virgin Mary, the first to enjoy the fruits of the Passion and Resurrection of her own Son, is the One who in a sure way leads us to Christ, the final goal of our deeds and of our entire life. For this reason, in the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte*, directing to the entire Church the exhortation of Christ to "launch out into the deep", I added that "on this path the Blessed Virgin accompanies us to whom ... together with many bishops ... I entrusted the third millennium" (n. 58). Inviting believers to contemplate unceasingly the face of Christ, I desired that for everyone the teacher of such contemplation be Mary his Mother.

3. Today I intend to express this desire more clearly with two symbolic gestures. In a while I will sign the Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae (the Rosary of the Virgin Mary)*. Besides, together with this document, dedicated to the praying of the Rosary, I proclaim the year that goes from October 2002 to October 2003 "the Year of the Rosary". I do so not only because this year is the 25th year of my Pontificate, but also because there occurs the 120th anniversary of the Encyclical *Supremi apostolatus officio* of 1 September 1883 with which my venerable Predecessor, Pope Leo XIII began the publication of a series of documents dedicated to the Rosary. There is still another reason. In the history of the Great Jubilees there existed the happy custom, after the Jubilee Year dedicated to Christ and to the work of the Redemption, of dedicating a year in honour of Mary imploring her to make fruitful the graces received.

4. For the rigorous but very rich work of contemplating the face of Christ along with Mary, is there a better way than the praying of the Rosary? However, we need to rediscover the mystical depth contained in the simplicity of this prayer, so much loved by popular tradition. This Marian prayer in its structure is in effect above all meditation on the mysteries of the life and work of Christ.

Repeating the invocation of the "*Hail Mary*", we can deepen our comprehension of the essential events of the mission of the Son of God on earth, that have been passed down to us by the Gospel and by Tradition. So that such a synthesis of the Gospel might be more complete and offer greater inspiration, in the Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* I decided to add another set of five mysteries to those already contemplated in the Rosary and I have called them "mysteries of light".

They cover the public life of the Lord from his Baptism in the Jordan to the beginning of his Passion. This suggestion has the goal of expanding the horizon of the Rosary so that it may be possible for those who recite it with devotion and not mechanically, to go more deeply into the content of the Good News and to conform their lives more to that of Christ.

5. I thank those who are present and those who on this special day are spiritually united with me. Thank you for your kindness and, especially, for the assurance of your constant support in prayer. I entrust this document on the Rosary to the Pastors and the faithful of the world. The Year of the Rosary, that we will observe together will certainly produce good fruit in the hearts of all, it will renew and intensify the work of grace of the Great Jubilee Year 2000 and will be a source of peace for the world.

May Mary, Queen of the Holy Rosary, whom we now see depicted in the venerable image honoured at Pompei, lead her children of the Church to the fullness of union with Christ in his glory.

The Holy Father greeted the pilgrims in the major European languages.

To the English-speaking

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors from England, Scotland, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Australia, the Philippines, Japan and the United States of America. Commending you and your families to the Blessed Virgin Mary, I invoke upon you joy and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

To Italians

I greet those participating in the General Assembly of the Focolare Movement accompanied by the Foundress, Chiara Lubich. Dearly beloved, I thank you for your presence and I entrust to you the mission of taking my cordial greeting to all those who belong to the movement. I am grateful for the support of your prayer and for the warmth with which you always accompany me on my apostolic mission on the highways of the world.

I also give a warm welcome to the Italian pilgrims. Particularly, with affection I greet Archbishop Domenico Sorrentino of Pompei and the many pilgrims who wished to bring here the venerable image of Our Lady honoured in that famous shrine, founded by Blessed Bartolo Longo, apostle of the Rosary. God willing, I hope to return to Pompei to venerate again the image of Our Lady. From that sanctuary, built near the ruins of the ancient Roman city that was barely touched by the preaching of the Gospel, before the eruption of Vesuvius destroyed it, the invitation to pray the Rosary takes on a symbolic value as the expression of a renewed dedication of Christians to the new evangelization of a world that has in many ways become pagan again....

To young people, the sick and newly-weds

I greet the *young people*, the *sick* and *newly-weds*. May the prayer of the Rosary said every day with faith and devotion, help you to experience in your lives the centrality of the mystery of Jesus, Redeemer of the human race, and, alongside him, the motherly tenderness of Mary.

To Polish People

I greet my cities Wadowice and Krakow and my fellow countrymen in Poland and abroad on this special day, 16 October. I thank you for accompanying me faithfully in these 24 years. I hope that you will continue to support me in my service to the Roman and universal Church. I count on it a great deal. God bless you.