



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO THE PARISH
OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI IN ROME

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Sunday, 17 October 1999

1. *"Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's"*
(Mt 22: 21).

The answer Jesus gave to some Jews who were putting him to the test, as on other occasions, stands out in today's Gospel passage. Jesus avoids the trap, showing himself a Master of great wisdom, who teaches the way of God faithfully, without giving in to compromises.

Render to God the things that are God's! It is clear that what counts most is the kingdom of God. Christ's words illuminate the lines of conduct for Christians in the world. Faith does not require of them detachment from temporal realities; indeed, it becomes a greater incentive for them to be committed with lively generosity to transforming themselves from within, thus contributing to establishing the kingdom of heaven.

The first reading, from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, also clearly accentuates this truth. For believers there is only one God, who with his Providence guides humanity's journey through history (cf. *Is* 45: 5-6). For this very reason they undertake to build the earthly city, in order to make it more just and human. They are upheld in this effort by the hope that they will one day participate in the communion of the heavenly city where God will be everything to everyone.

2. Dear brothers and sisters of St Francis of Assisi Parish at Monte Mario, I am pleased to visit your community today and to celebrate the Eucharist with you. In this period of immediate preparation for the Jubilee, we are constantly invited to contemplate the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God so as to prepare ourselves to cross the threshold of the third millennium with the

proper interior attitude.

I greet you all with great affection. I greet the Cardinal Vicar, the Auxiliary Bishop Vincenzo Apicella of the sector, your zealous parish priest, Fr Maurizio Fagnani, the Superior General of the Piarists and all of the Piarist Fathers of the Roman Province who work with him in the pastoral guidance of the community.

A grateful thought then goes to the many members of religious institutes in the parish territory, as well as to the numerous lay groups who, with their different initiatives of catechesis, charity and organized recreation, enrich the parish's life, as well as the members of the pastoral council and the finance council.

I extend a cordial greeting to the AGESCI 27 group, the young people and leaders of the Calasanctius After-School Association, recently founded to create a centre for the children and young people of the neighbourhood.

I congratulate you on this youth work and above all, I am glad that adults share in the commitments and responsibilities of the pastoral care of youth and do not leave young people to develop alone on their path of education in the faith. For young people to be able to turn to mature adults who know how to suggest lofty goals to them, who can listen to them and offer them valid responses to the fundamental existential questions is a guarantee for their future and an enrichment for the Church and society. I therefore urge you to continue on this road, inspired by the example of St Joseph Calasanctius, founder of the Pious Schools and patron of popular Christian schools, who worked so hard for the good and for the Christian and cultural formation of youth.

3. Speaking of young people, my thoughts naturally turn to World Youth Day which, as everyone knows, will be celebrated in Rome from 15 to 20 August 2000. Although this is an initiative primarily for young people, it cannot but see the participation of the entire Christian community of Rome, with all its members and branches. We must prepare ourselves to offer a warm welcome to the young men and women who will come to Rome for this event. Let us entrust to the Lord, through Mary's intercession, the successful outcome and spiritual fruit which this great event will not fail to produce.

Next to your praiseworthy commitment to the formation of young people, I do not want to forget the many other charitable and evangelizing initiatives of your parish, especially those which are the result of the City Mission that has just ended, but whose spirit and pastoral style must continue to imbue all apostolic activities. I am referring in particular to the setting up of a place to welcome and comfort the poor, as well as the centres for hearing the Gospel which you have opened in so many parts of the neighbourhood. We must never tire of being missionaries and of spreading the Gospel of charity.

4. Dear parishioners of St Francis of Assisi at Monte Mario, coming among you this morning I noticed how small your community church is, which, although it boasts over three centuries of history, is proving insufficient for your liturgical and pastoral needs. While I hope that you will soon have another larger one, I urge you to draw from the building's smallness a further incentive to be a living community, committed to spreading the Gospel everywhere. May yours be a missionary parish, composed of enthusiastic believers in Christ who can witness to the faith with your life.

May the Virgin Mary protect you and Sts Joseph Calasanctius and Francis of Assisi obtain from God for each of you the gift of perseverance in your good resolutions, in the spirit and commitments of the new evangelization.

Amen!

© Copyright 1999 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana