



The Holy See

**LETTER OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE CARDINAL VICAR OF THE DIOCESE OF ROME,
CARDINAL CAMILLO RUINI**

Venerable Brother!

On Sunday, 16 December, God willing, I will visit the Roman parish of St María Josefa of the Heart of Jesus. With this visit I will have visited 300 parishes since I began this spiritual pastoral pilgrimage in 1978 with the visit to the parish of St Francis Xavier in the Garbatella area.

Spontaneously I feel the desire to give thanks to God as I reach this significant goal. It is a sentiment that I want to share with you, my Cardinal Vicar for the Diocese of Rome, while with great fondness, I recall your esteemed predecessor, the late Cardinal Ugo Poletti, who accompanied me in the first part of this pilgrimage, and with tact and care helped me to learn the Diocese.

I am most grateful, because for me the visit to the Roman parishes has always been an enjoyable task. To pass the morning and afternoon among the faithful, in the various neighborhoods, with the parish priest and the priests, religious, and dedicated laity; celebrating the Mass in the parish church; greeting the children, the young people, the pastoral councils; reawakening in each the commitment to the new evangelization, all this has been and still is of great importance as I continue to become familiar with the human, social and spiritual reality of the Diocese. So much more for a Pope who has "come from a far country". If today I can say that I feel fully "Roman" it is thanks to the visits to the parishes of this extraordinary and beautiful City.

Before my eyes, in this moment, pass the numberless faces of Pastors and Parochial Vicars, whom I had the joy of meeting, first inviting them to my table, and then seeing them at work in the Parishes. I want to renew my "thank you" to each and every one for the warm welcome given everywhere, and for the prayer, encouragement, suggestions offered during the visits, precious

not only for my ministry as the Bishop of Rome, but also for the service entrusted to me of the universal Church.

Visiting the parish communities, I could exercise my mission as Bishop of Rome, Successor of Peter, in a more concrete way. The time I dedicated to the faithful of Rome was not taken away from those of the entire world. I found it was fruitful for the faithful of the world and viceversa my concern for all the Churches has made me more rooted than ever in the special Diocese that is Rome.

While I prepare to visit a Roman parish for the 300th time, I return spiritually to the visits that have taken place: paleo-Christian basilicas, ultra-modern churches, some in the historic centre, others in the vast areas that sprang up in the 1950's and 60's or in areas that have just now become urban. Everywhere I have proclaimed the same Gospel, I have broken the One Bread: Christ, Redeemer of the human person. To all my sincere best wishes and for all a prayer and a blessing.

From the Vatican, 14 December 2001

IOANNES PAULUS II