



The Holy See

LETTER OF JOHN PAUL II

FOR THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF "CARITAS" OF ROME

*To my Venerable Brother
Cardinal Camillo Ruini
Vicar General for the Diocese of Rome*

1. I have learned with deep pleasure that the Rome *Caritas* is preparing to celebrate its 25th anniversary. On this happy occasion, I wish to send my cordial greetings and good wishes to you, Your Eminence, to those in charge and to the staff of this important pastoral institution, as well as to the entire diocesan community.

This praiseworthy institution was founded by the late Cardinal Ugo Poletti as a response to the many forms of poverty that existed in the territory and was entrusted to the priestly zeal of the unforgettable Mons. Luigi Di Liegro. In recent years, it has proclaimed and witnessed to the Gospel of charity with admirable apostolic enthusiasm. Priests, consecrated persons and members of the lay faithful, especially youth, have striven to be eloquent signs of God's love and instruments of peace in every milieu, motivating Christian communities above all to pay attention to the lowliest.

Twenty-five years later, we can see the results of this providential initiative for the parishes of Rome and the whole civil community. Public bodies, the Lazio Region and the Municipality of Rome in particular also make ample use of its services, to which they give their generous support.

2. I would like to express my deep gratitude to you for the continuous effort the Rome *Caritas* makes for the integral development of the human person. The mission it carries out through commendable and courageous activities of Christian solidarity is invaluable. Meeting the needs of the poor, bringing relief to the sick and the suffering, it witnesses in practice to that "'creativity' in charity" to which I invited Christians in my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (cf. n. 50).

I hope that this happy event will inspire in all who work in this important diocesan institution a new

desire for fidelity to its original charism: it makes an essential reference to the freely given and merciful love of God for men and women, as well as to the supernatural virtue of charity, instilled in the hearts of believers. On the basis of these firm spiritual reference points, I encourage you to proceed with confidence and apostolic zeal, both in the task of training and in your daily activities.

May adherence to Christ's Gospel, an inexhaustible source of apostolic vitality, increase in every person so as to enable him or her to face courageously the challenges of our time. Today, as in the past, operators of Christian charity are asked first and foremost to be constantly on close terms with the divine Teacher, since service to our neediest brethren is expressed through ardent passion for the Church and for the world's salvation. It is necessary to foster the work and witness of charity with daily prayer and listening regularly to the Word of God. Above all, it is important that life be centred on the mystery of the Eucharist, to imitate Jesus and to be ever more willing, in imitation of him, to become "Good Samaritans" for those people today who live in conditions of hardship or neglect.

3. May the Virgin Mary, "*Salus Populi Romani*", accompany the Rome *Caritas* with her maternal protection. For my part, I assure you of my constant remembrance in prayer and I cordially impart to you, Venerable Brother, to the director, Mons. Guerino Di Tora, to the members, volunteers and all who cooperate in the various beneficent projects of this precious diocesan institution a special Apostolic Blessing, with a particular thought for all whom it lovingly assists.

From the Vatican, 29 September 2004