



# The Holy See

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## **ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II IN THE BASILICA OF "SANTA MARIA SOPRA MINERVA" IN ROME**

*Sunday, 5 November 1978*

This day that I have wished to consecrate in a particular way to the Patrons of Italy is now drawing to a close. Having been elected by the Sacred College of Cardinals to be Successor of Saint Peter, I accepted this service with profound trepidation, considering it to be the will of our Lord Jesus Christ. When I thought about not being born here, but about being a foreigner to this land, there came to my mind the figure of Saint Peter, who was also a foreigner in Rome. And so, in the spirit of faith and out of obedience, I accepted this election, by virtue of which I have become Successor of Peter and Bishop of Rome.

All the more do I feel the need to insert myself in this new land that Peter chose, coming from Jerusalem, through Antioch, to Rome. And he chose it to establish on it his apostolic See. This land has always been near to me; now it has become my second homeland, and for this reason I wanted to express today in a special way my union with this land, with Italy. I desire to be part of it in all its historical richness, and at the same time in all its current reality. A particular witness of every country is made up by its own saints. Two of these, Saint Catherine of Siena and Saint Francis of Assisi, have been proclaimed Patrons of Italy.

Here before the relics of Saint Catherine I must once more thank divine Wisdom for having willed to make use of this simple and at the same time profound heart of a woman to point out the way, in a period of uncertainty, to the Church and especially to the Successors of Peter. Such great love, and such great courage! Such wonderful simplicity, but also such wonderful depth of soul: a person open to all the inspirations of the Spirit, and conscious of her mission.

I sincerely hope that in our times Saint Catherine, Doctor of the Church, will continue to be the patroness of the awareness of the Christian vocation of everyone. An awareness which, in a particular way, must mature and be increased, so that the Church can fulfil the mission entrusted to her by Christ, in accordance with the needs of our times!

In Saint Catherine of Siena I see a visible sign of the mission of women in the Church. I would like

to say many things about this theme, but the short space of time today does not permit it. The Church of Jesus Christ and of the Apostles is at the same time a Church that is Mother and Spouse. These biblical expressions clearly reveal how deeply the mission of women is inscribed in the mystery of the Church. And may we discover together the many-sided significance of this mission—going hand in hand, with the world of women today, and basing ourselves on the riches which from the beginning the Creator placed in the heart of women, and on the wonderful wisdom of this heart, which God wished to reveal many centuries ago in Saint Catherine of Siena.

Just as in those times she was the teacher and guide of the Popes who had gone away from Rome, so also today may she be an inspiration to the Pope who has come to Rome, and may she bring close to him not only her own homeland but also all the lands of the earth, in the one single embrace of the universal Church. With these hopes I bless you all with all my heart.

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