



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO PILGRIMS FROM SAN MARINO-MONTEFELTRO**

Saturday, 19 April 1997

Dear Brothers and Sisters of San Marino-Montefeltro,

1. You have come festively and in large numbers to tell me once again of your joy at the reorganization of your Diocese after years of a temporary and uncertain arrangement, despite the loving care of Pastors who jointly administered the Dioceses of Rimini and of Montefeltro. I thank them cordially.

I greet and thank your Bishop, Paolo Rabitti, who has come to your community “*toto corde*”, that is, with all his heart, to help you remain a united and fervent Church. I greet the priests, the religious and the civil authorities who have accompanied you, and all those present.

2. Dear brothers and sisters, with your Bishop I also say to you: “Church of San Marino-Montefeltro, stand up and walk!”.

You live in a *complex and varied region*. You live in a countryside that is unpolluted for the most part but in need of ecological attention, the rebirth of its social and occupational fabric, the improvement of its roads, the restoration of its cultural assets which are in danger of decay. And to a certain extent — especially in the Republic of San Marino — you are witnessing a vitality in urban life, trade, tourism, hospital care and diplomacy that demands a “soul”, that is, wise gradualness and harmony, if it is to be genuine and lasting.

As Christians, you know that you must be leaven in the world, and therefore you cannot shirk commitment in both of these two situations in the Diocese, showing in Montefeltro and in San Marino that you are active, enterprising and consistent Christians. The Gospel is the resource for

every situation. *Believers are called to be for society what the soul is for the body: a source of vitality, truth and honesty.* Just as the monks of old ploughed your lands and restored life to your mountains by their labours, so you, Christians of today, should zealously devote yourselves to tilling souls, so that all may discover the optimism of hope and the joy of working together for the common good.

Rediscover your zest for life, for the family, for the town; encourage a healthy modernity, without stumbling in the weariness and blind alleys of those social contexts which have no future.

3. The arrival of a residential Bishop has encouraged your community and spurred you to renewed commitment. Keep this enthusiasm alive and accept the inevitable effort of enlivening the diocesan structures. First of all you must live in the most heartfelt and active *ecclesial communion*. Love, help and listen to your Bishop, so that he can joyfully and fruitfully give you the service you expect of him.

Priests and religious of San Marino-Montefeltro, only the union of your intentions and actions can put you in a position to strengthen the Diocese. You will be able deal with the rather advanced average age and the many pastoral demands if you join forces and work with great missionary generosity. I bless and encourage the dedication you have already given to your mission.

You are also feeling the urgent need for more *priestly vocations and those of special consecration*. They are the most eloquent proof of a Church's vitality. I appeal to families and young people to open their hearts to responding promptly to the Lord's call. Priests, for their part, know that the care of vocations has priority in their pastoral work.

To you, *the laity*, I recommend active involvement in the community. Along with your particular civil, political, social and cultural duties, you must emphasize the pastoral life, that is, catechesis, the liturgy, formation, the sacraments, Christian life in the family and in social contexts, and charity. I would like to see your parishes, religious houses, Catholic Action, associations, groups, to be beehives of apostolic, missionary and evangelizing effort.

Dear lay people, *you are the Church: be the Church!*

4. The *Republic of San Marino* is an important and unique part of the Diocese. I extend a cordial and grateful greeting to it, to the Captains Regent, to the authorities present and, of course, to all who are gathered here and to all its citizens. Dear friends, I am aware of your efforts to make your country present and active in the world, with that characteristic sense of freedom and humanity which stems from your holy patron Marinus and is innate in your people. I express great satisfaction with this. Even a small nation is great if it is founded on the rock of truth and radiates the light of justice.

Do not squander centuries of civilization Your Republic is eager to transform itself into a modern country, to build its development on a European level, to respond to its vocation of tourism and culture, to renew its town-planning, to make itself receptive to international requirements.

I hope that this transformation will take place according to a *correct hierarchy of values*, and I urge the people of San Marino to remain firmly anchored to the moral, family and social values which are characteristic of their history. It is a question of *achieving economic prosperity without squandering centuries of civilization*.

The Republic of San Marino knows that, on many sides, its current experience is seen as a significant “test” of a sound laicism combined with genuine respect and promotion of religious values; of wise modernization of social life without obliterating its traditional heritage; of sincere participation in international life, without being aligned with hegemonic drives, but always making a contribution imbued with democracy and freedom.

I am pleased that this spirit has also permeated Church-State relations to such a degree that authoritative and distinguished persons (some of whom are present here) were able to draft the recent Agreement between the Holy See and the Republic of San Marino, which is certainly another page of civilization in the Republic’s more than a thousand-year-old history.

5. Dear brothers and sisters of the Diocese of San Marino and Montefeltro, thank you for your visit and thank you for your gifts!

I ask the Lord that your firm resolution to help your Diocese recover its full vigour may receive the seal of the Lord’s grace. To this end, as I invoke the intercession of Our Lady of Grace and of Sts Marinus and Leo, I impart my Apostolic Blessing to all of you, present and absent, from Montefeltro and San Marino.

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