



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PIOUS SODALITY OF PICENO**

Sunday, 16 March 1997

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. I am pleased to meet you, members of the Pious Sodality of Piceno and representatives of the numerous and active community of the Marches region living in Rome, who are rightly proud of the splendid church of San Salvatore in Lauro and the adjoining monumental complex.

I extend a cordial greeting to your President, Mr Franco Santolini, whom I thank for kindly giving me an interesting panoramic view of the life and activities of the association. I also greet the chaplain, Mons. Carlo Liberati, and all you who, by your presence, testify to the devotion and affection of all the people of the Marches region for the Pope.

2. Our meeting offers me the welcome opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for the efforts of your worthy Sodality to preserve and spread the traditional values of faith, industriousness and solidarity so deeply rooted in your land of origin. In the almost four centuries of your presence in the Eternal City, the people of the Marches region have been distinguished for their constant fidelity to the Church, for promoting a better knowledge of the history and life of the Marches provinces and for the many activities undertaken in the areas of formation, welfare and worship.

This church of San Salvatore in Lauro, with its adjoining parochial works, is an eloquent testimony to your collaboration in the pastoral activities of the Diocese and, above all, to your commitment to spreading among Romans and pilgrims from all over the world the devotion to the Blessed Virgin of Loreto. One of the oldest and most famous copies of this venerated image you lovingly preserve in this church.

3. My visit today takes place over a century since the one made by my venerable predecessor, Pope Pius IX, after having provided for the restoration of the church. Like many other ancient churches of the city, this monumental complex testifies to the ability of the citizens of Rome to blend with other peoples — in this case with the noble people of the Marches region — and how, together, they have lived and expressed the Gospel message in evocative examples of art and culture.

In thanking you for your kind welcome, I hope you will continue with ever greater apostolic zeal to co-operate actively in spreading the Gospel, especially in view of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. I urge you, both as individuals and as an association, to make your specific contribution of spiritual life and concrete projects in harmony with the Diocese of Rome, so that the many pilgrims will find in the heart of the city hospitable Christian communities dedicated to proclaiming the Gospel.

With these sentiments, as I invoke on each of those present, on all the members of the Pious Sodality of Piceno and on the whole community of the Marches region here in Rome the maternal protection of the Blessed Virgin of Loreto, I sincerely impart to each of you and to your families a special Apostolic Blessing.

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