



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
AT A CONCERT MARKING THE ANNIVERSARY
OF THE BIRTH OF POPE PAUL VI**

Saturday, 22 November 1997

*Your Eminences,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and the Priesthood,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen of the Diplomatic Corps,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

In the memory and heart of the Church and the world, as Cardinal Casaroli clearly stated in his heartfelt remembrance, the Servant of God Pope Paul VI has a monument that no one can destroy. This evening's solemn celebration is further proof of it. In this hall named after him, his figure, more alive than ever in all of us, has been so effectively recalled by the generous commitment of so many people, to whom I now address a word of greeting and gratitude.

I first address my thanks to the members of the International Festival Orchestra of Brescia and Bergamo and to the Prague Chamber Choir, and to Maestro Agostino Orizio, who directed them so well. Their magnificent performance raised all our spirits to that dimension of harmonious beauty which Paul VI frequently indicated as a vehicle for knowing and communicating the truth.

In particular, I express my cordial gratitude to dear Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, for long years my appreciated and closest co-worker, who has illumined this commemoration with his ample and profound account, which in certain passages had the tone of a touching witness reinforced by many years of sharing the great Pontiff's pastoral concerns.

Veneration and filial affection for Pope Paul VI have brought a great many people here this evening. Many of them knew him personally; some, the more fortunate, benefited from his

friendship. I address my fraternal wishes to each of them.

First of all I respectfully greet President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro of Italy, and all the other authorities and dignitaries present. I next greet the Cardinals, with a special thought for Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, the former Cardinal Montini's successor in the cathedra of St Ambrose. I also greet Archbishop Pasquale Macchi, Bishop John Magee and Auxiliary Bishop Vigilio Mario Olmi of Brescia, who has come here with the President of the Paul VI Institute of Brescia, the mayor of that city and the parish priest of Concesio. Lastly, with particular feeling, I greet all his relatives and friends here with us this evening.

In mentioning Concesio, the birthplace of Giovanni Battista Montini, I naturally think of his family home and the baptismal font where he received the sacrament of new birth on the very day that — how can we fail to remember it? — the soul of St Thérèse of Lisieux departed this world. We can certainly link the spirituality of this Carmelite saint with the religious desire of Pope Paul VI, who expressed his great love for Christ through his long, wise service to the Church.

During these 100 years, the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council was without doubt the most important ecclesial event. The Lord desired a frail son of the Brescian region to become the sturdy helmsman of the barque of Peter precisely during the celebration of the Council and in the first years of its implementation. We are all deeply grateful to God for the gift of this great Pope, who knew how to guide the Church in a historical period of vast, sudden and unforeseeable changes. Let us praise the Lord with sincere gratitude for the priceless legacy of teaching and virtue left by Paul VI to believers and to all humanity. It is our task to treasure this wise legacy. May God help us to continue his apostolic and missionary work, through the intercession of Mary, whom my venerable Predecessor especially honoured with the title "Mother of the Church".

With my Blessing I again express my sentiments of gratitude to all.

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