



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE BISHOP OF NICE
ON THE OCCASION OF THE THIRD CENTENARY
OF THE CONSECRATION OF THE CATHEDRAL
BASILICA OF ST MARY AND ST REPARATA**

*To the Most Reverend Jean Bonfils
Bishop of Nice*

As the Diocese of Nice celebrates the third centenary of the consecration of the Cathedral Basilica of St Mary and St Reparata, which took place on 2 May 1699, I join wholeheartedly in the joy and thanksgiving of the Christian community that is gathering in this place, so significant for the diocesan Church and a sign of her unity round her Bishop. The cathedral of Nice is now dedicated to the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, and to St Reparata, whom the Roman Martyrology describes as a virgin, a native of Caesarea in Palestine and a martyr who refused to offer sacrifice to idols.

By a solemn liturgical act, the consecration made the cathedral the centre of your Diocese, since the cathedral reflects its life, just as a house reflects the life of the family that lives there. In this place, open to all, each person meets Christ, who calls his disciples together to nourish them with his Word and his Body. A continual reference-point for all the members of the Diocese, it is meant to unite the faithful in a "Church-assembly" and "Church-community". The cathedral should be seen as the centre of the Diocese's liturgical life: "In the majesty of its building it is a symbol of the spiritual temple that is built up in souls and is resplendent with the glory of divine grace. As the Apostle Paul says: 'We are the temple of the living God' (2 Cor 6:16)" (Apostolic Constitution *Mirificus eventus*, 7 December 1965).

The cathedral not only symbolizes a part of the Church, but also the whole Church. In fact, the Church of Christ is present in each local Church, and Christ's presence dwells within her. Does not the Prayer of Dedication recall that "here is reflected the mystery of the Church. The Church is

fruitful, made holy by the blood of Christ: a bride made radiant with his glory, a virgin splendid in the wholeness of her faith, a mother blessed through the power of the Spirit"? In this way all the faithful are invited to acquire a deeper knowledge of the Church's mystery. In particular, they will remember that the cathedral is the church where the Bishop's chair is placed, the cathedra that is "the sign of his teaching office and pastoral power in the particular Church, and ... of the unity of believers in the faith that the Bishop proclaims as shepherd of the Lord's flock" (Ceremonial of Bishops, n. 42). Since the early centuries, there has been a succession of "transmitters of the apostolic line" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 20) on the cathedra of Nice. The ordained ministers and the faithful are called to gather round the Bishop's chair, for "where the Bishop is, there is the Church" (*Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, 8, 2).

I hope that the Catholics of your Diocese can come in large numbers to this cathedral, especially during the Great Jubilee, to strengthen their faith, to have a deeper sense of belonging to the Church, to repent and to become missionaries of the new evangelization (cf. Bull of Indiction of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 *Incarnationis mysterium*, n. 6). They will earnestly reinforce the bonds of ecclesial communion by coming on Sundays to celebrate the memorial of the Lord's Death and Resurrection. In entering this dwelling-place of God, whose décor draws one's gaze to heaven and sings the mystery of Revelation in Jesus Christ, they will come here to hear his constant call to know and follow him, as the psalm says: "We have thought on your steadfast love, O God, in the midst of your temple" (Ps 48:9). In the perspective of the Jubilee, they will also come to draw strength from forgiveness, in order to find the peace which comes from the risen Lord.

As I pray to the Virgin Mary and St Reparata that this anniversary may strengthen your diocesans' faith in God, their love of the Church, their bonds of communion and their missionary fervour, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to you, to those who will attend the celebration of the dedication and to all the faithful who celebrate the Holy Mysteries in this place or come to pray here.

From the Vatican, 20 April 1999.

JOHN PAUL II