



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO ANCONA, ITALY

***ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PATIENTS AND HOSPITAL STAFF***

*Regional Hospital of Ancona
Sunday, 30 May 1999*

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

1. I am very pleased that I can extend an affectionate greeting to you. Especially to you, dear sick people! Every day in my prayers I especially remember the sick and I know that many of you do the same for the Pope and for the Church. Suffering, lived with faith and love, becomes a source of deep spiritual union, and this enriches everyone.

I cordially greet the doctors and paramedics, as well as the religious and lay people who serve with dedication each day in this health-care structure.

I have come to Ancona for the millennium of the Cathedral of St Cyriacus. The stone church has given me the opportunity to visit the Church made of men and women, the community of living stones. And among these living stones are you, who in facing the trial of illness with faith and love, help to build the spiritual temple, the Church of Christ.

2. Dear sick people, I feel spiritually close to each of you, who have a special place in the heart and mission of the Church. You are undergoing a time of trial which can sometimes be hard for our feeble human strength to endure. It is especially then that Christ calls you to be united with him, to share in his sufferings and to know the power of his Resurrection. This is what the Apostle Paul says (cf. Phil 3:10), adding: "I can do all things in him who strengthens me" (Phil 4:13).

Yes, dear friends, Jesus is our strength! He is so especially when our cross becomes too heavy and, as happened to him, we feel anxiety and fear (cf. Mk 14:33). Let us remember then his words to the disciples: "Watch and pray" (Mk 14:38). By watching and praying with him we enter into his paschal mystery: he lets us drink from his cup, which is the

cup of his Passion, but above all, a cup of love. The love of God can transform evil into good, darkness into light, death into life.

3. Dear friends, if we are enlightened by faith, the hospital, a place of suffering, can become a temple of mercy for everyone: for those who are hospitalized, for those who work there, for those who come to visit the sick and for the entire Christian community. A hospital can become a centre of mercy releasing vital energy, the fruit of a common commitment to serve life, to fight evil with good.

At this moment, how can we forget those who are at the mercy of war and have need of treatment? Even hospitals have not been spared the consequences of the conflict! This is the most serious evil: man's hatred and violence towards his own brothers and sisters, fratricidal hatred; this is the first disease of the spirit that we must combat! The only therapy for this evil is conversion, forgiveness and reconciliation. From this hospital, where you are confined to bed sometimes for days on end, you can be close to all our brothers and sisters who are suffering in various areas of the world, where the right to life and health is violated daily. Your illness can become a bridge of human and Christian solidarity: the Cross of Christ is a source of peace.

4. Who can help us in this task, which is certainly not easy? Who else but she who stands at the foot of the Cross, the Mother of Jesus and our Mother? I entrust each of you to her whom we call upon as "Health of the Sick", so that you will soon recover and in the meantime bear your sufferings with that serenity which is the great witness of the sick.

For my part, I will remember you in my heart and assure you of my prayers, as I thank you again for the spiritual support which you all offer me. I now cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to you all, extending it to your relatives and to everyone who works each day in this great health-care structure.