



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II FOR THE INAUGURATION OF THE NEW ENTRANCE TO THE VATICAN MUSEUMS

Monday, 7 February 2000

Your Eminences,

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and the Priesthood,

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*1. The inauguration of the new entrance to the Vatican Museums is a great joy for me. The fact that it is occurring during the first phase of the Great Jubilee gives it an exceptionally symbolic meaning. After opening the Holy Doors of the Roman Basilicas, an access to the grace of the Redeemer, today I am inaugurating the entrance that leads to that temple of art and culture represented by the Museums. I am very satisfied with the completion of this demanding project. I thank Cardinal Edmund Casimir Szoka for his sentiments, which he also expressed on your behalf, and for his interesting presentation of the work completed and the results achieved: I express my deepest appreciation to him and to the Technical Services Administration, and extend it to the consultants and workmen, as I gratefully recall Cardinal Castillo Lara, here with us today, who has the merit of having begun this endeavour. I also express my heartfelt encouragement, through Dr Francesco Buranelli, Regent of the General Administration, to the executives and all the personnel of the Vatican Museums. It is now their task to manage this impressive structure in the best way, so that it will achieve the goals for which it was conceived and built.2. When, at the end of the 18th century, Pope Clement XIV and Pope Pius VI founded the Vatican Museums in the modern sense of the term, visitors were a very restricted élite. Today, thousands come every day from every social and cultural class and from every part of the world. One can truly say that the Museums, at the cultural level, are one of the most significant doors that the Holy See opens to the world. Hence the value, not only practical but symbolic, of a more "capacious" entrance, in other words, one that is more welcoming and expresses the Church's renewed desire to dialogue with humanity through art and culture, making available to everyone the patrimony entrusted to her by history.3. I cordially greet Giuliano Vangi, the sculptor of the work placed in this new entrance, and thank him, because his sculpture is not a celebratory work, but an invitation to reflection on the Petrine ministry to which Providence has called me. Since the first day of my Pontificate, I have been keenly aware of my mission to help men and women "cross the threshold": to escape from the constraints of materialism into the freedom of faith, the freedom to be themselves by following Christ the Redeemer, the supreme defender of their dignity and rights. This service to humanity has two elements which are portrayed on the two sides of the marble block: the element of action

and, equally important, that of prayer. Indeed, in the face of human suffering, the Church finds in God the strength to spur man towards a future of hope and freedom. I also congratulate the sculptor Cecco Bonanotte, responsible for making the portal of the new entrance. The subject of creation, which he has symbolically evoked, harmonizes well with that of art, and seems to invite the visitor to marvel at the mystery of the Creator Spirit in the universe, in living beings and especially in the human person.⁴ The partnership between the Church and artists has always been "a source of mutual spiritual enrichment" which "has been a great boon for an understanding of man, of the authentic image and truth of the person" (*Letter to Artists*, n. 13). With this conviction, I inaugurate the new entrance to the Vatican Museums, as I thank you all once again and bless you cordially, along with everyone who has worked to achieve this truly monumental project. ©

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