



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PILGRIMS
FROM THE DIOCESE OF AVERSA (ITALY)**

Saturday, 19 June 2004

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Diocese of Aversa,

1. I am delighted to extend my heartfelt welcome to all of you. This gathering marks a meaningful moment in your pilgrimage to the tombs of the Apostles at the closing of the pastoral visit carried out by your Archbishop.

I greet you with affection, beginning with your Pastor, Archbishop Mario Milano, whom I thank for the kind words he has addressed to me on behalf of you all. I greet Cardinal Crescenzo Sepe, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, the priests, Religious and all who are involved in parish councils and in diocesan pastoral activities. My thought then goes to all here present, together with those unable to come in person, calling to mind in a special way the young people, families and the elderly or sick who are alone. I assure each one of my spiritual closeness with affection and prayer.

2. The pastoral visit that today draws to a close was for your diocesan community one of the most important fruits of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000; a unique "time of grace", allowing for reflection and the deepening of communion between all members of the Diocese, closely united with its own Pastor and with the Successor of Peter. I am convinced that this will give rise to a renewed ascetic and missionary thrust in all of the faithful towards the building of a new society.

With reference to this, I think back to what I said to you in the springtime of the year 2000, when I met with you in St Peter's Square. At that time I brought to your attention the importance of material and spiritual solidarity; today, I repeat those words once again: "*Be witnesses of solidarity*" (*Insegnamenti XXIII/1* [2000/1], p. 558). It is a solidarity that begins with the most

immediate aspects of daily life, from work to assistance, in order to give life to a more just and equitable society.

3. However, side-by-side with the social sphere, the sense of solidarity and of reciprocal help must also invest in that of spiritual communion and the evangelizing mission of every Christian community. Is not holiness the greatest witness of solidarity that your Diocese is called to offer to the men and women of our time? Yes! Dear brothers and sisters, announce Christ and his Gospel coherently, with generous fidelity and trustful abandonment to the divine will. Nourish your existence with fervent prayer, docile listening to the Word of God and frequent use of the sacraments, especially Confession and the Eucharist.

Dear brothers and sisters, continue the walk you have begun, strengthened too by the grace of today's pilgrimage. May God make fruitful your proposals of ecclesial communion and the pledge for the new evangelization, according to the guidelines resulting from this pastoral visit.

From the Marian shrine of Casapesenna, which I had the joy of visiting 14 years ago, may the Holy Virgin continue to accompany you in this engaging spiritual and apostolic itinerary.

On my part, I assure you of my spiritual closeness and I cordially bless you, together with your parochial and religious communities, your families and all those who are dear to you.