



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER PAUL VI TO THE MEMBERS OF THE SOVEREIGN MILITARY ORDER OF MALTA*

Friday, 8 July 1977

We are happy to greet and welcome this morning, in the traditional Audience, the delegation of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. I thank you first of all, Frá Angelo de Mojana di Cologna, Grand Master of the Order, for the noble words you addressed to us, the expression of ancestral faith and of the spirit that has animated the glorious Institution down the centuries. We thank too, the members of the Sovereign Council and all those who have accompanied you to this Audience. In them we like to see represented all the well-deserving members of the Order itself.

More than all words, your presence speaks to us of the spirit which animates you. This spirit, drawing on the prestigious traditions of the Order during its long glorious history, sustains with praiseworthy generosity numerous works of charity and welfare, which are today the adequate expression of its unflinching vitality. One who turns over the pages, so rich in events, in which the centuries-old life of the Institution is, as it were, carved in gold letters, cannot fail to see two things. These are the richness and tenacity of a sincere and manly faith, generous and strong, ardent and courageous, which has succeeded in expressing itself always in elect forms of Christian life, not infrequently reaching the solemn commitment of vows, and the effort of luminous charity. This charity has never failed to meet the necessities of its neighbour: of pilgrims to Jerusalem at the beginning, of the needy and the sick, also promoting in an exemplary way the advancement of civilization, social welfare and cultural progress, at the same pace as its own works connected with its hospitable and beneficial mission. The spread and effectiveness of these works, still scattered over Europe and in the Middle East, thanks to the united commitment of the international structure of the Order in all its members of the various "languages" and their "priorates", shows that this reality of yours has still remained valid, even in the changed sociological conditions of our times.

While we are glad to acknowledge such fruitfulness, we exhort you to keep high, today and always, your twofold flame: that of faith and charity. It is that of religion lived with deep conviction

and instilled concretely into daily life. It is that of that crystal-clear adherence to Christ Jesus which is able to see in children, in the sick in prisoners, in the poor (cf. *Mt* 25, 31-40) his mysterious and troubling presence. This, in a world that needs love so much, stimulates to the exercise of love in all the forms required by the changing and growing necessities of suffering brothers.

Be burning touches of faith and charity. And the Lord will in be with you.

This is the prayer we raise to him for you, present here, and for all the noble ranks of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta: and, in the name of Christ, we encourage you all and bless you.

*ORa n.29 p.2.
