



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO VIGEVANO AND PAVIA (ITALY)

VISIT TO THE "SAN MATTEO" POLYCLINIC IN PAVIA

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE DIRECTORS, MEDICAL STAFF,
THE SICK AND THEIR RELATIVES**

*"San Matteo" Polyclinic, Pavia
Sunday, 22 April 2007*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The programme for my Pastoral Visit to Pavia could not have omitted a stop at the San Matteo Polyclinic to meet you, dear sick people, who come not only from the Province of Pavia but also from the whole of Italy.

I express my personal closeness and solidarity to each one of you as I also embrace in spirit the sick, the suffering, people in difficulty in your Diocese and all those who take loving care of them. I would like to reach out to you all with a word of encouragement and hope.

I address a respectful greeting to Mr Alberto Guglielmo, President of the Polyclinic, and I thank him for his cordial words that he has just addressed to me. My gratitude extends to the doctors, the nurses and all the personnel who work here daily.

I offer grateful thoughts to the Camillian Fathers who every day, with lively pastoral zeal, bring to the sick the comfort of the faith, as well as to the Sisters of Providence involved in generous service in keeping with the charism of St Luigi Scrosoppi, their Founder.

I express heartfelt thanks to the representative of the sick [who spoke prior to the Pope's Address]

and I think with affection of their relatives who share moments of trepidation and trustful expectation with their loved ones.

A hospital is a place which in a certain way we might call "holy", where one experiences not only the frailty of human nature but also the enormous potential and resources of human ingenuity and technology at the service of life.

Human life! However often it is explored, this gift always remains a mystery.

I am aware that this hospital structure, your "San Matteo" Polyclinic, is well known in this City and in the rest of Italy, in particular for its pioneering surgery on several occasions. Here, you seek to alleviate suffering in the attempt to restore the person to complete health and this often happens, partly thanks to modern scientific discoveries; and here, truly comforting results are obtained.

I strongly hope that the necessary scientific and technological progress will constantly go hand in hand with the awareness that together with the good of the sick person, one is promoting those fundamental values, such as the respect for and defence of life in all its stages, on which the authentically human quality of coexistence depends.

Being here with you, it comes naturally to me to think of Jesus, who in the course of his earthly existence always showed special attention to the suffering, healing them and giving them the possibility of returning to a life of family and social relations which illness had compromised.

I am also thinking of the first Christian community, where, as we read in these days in the Acts of the Apostles, many cases of healing and miracles accompanied the Apostles' preaching.

The Church, following the example of her Lord, always expresses special preference for the suffering and, as the President said, sees Christ himself in the suffering and does not cease to offer to the sick the necessary technical assistance and human love, knowing that she is called to express Christ's love and concern for them and for those who care for them.

Technical progress, technology and human love should always go together!

Moreover, Jesus' words, "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt 25: 40; 45), resonate with special timeliness in this place. In every person stricken with illness it is Jesus himself who waits for our love.

Suffering is of course repugnant to the human spirit; yet, it is true that when it is accepted with love and compassion and illumined by faith, it becomes a precious opportunity that mysteriously unites one to Christ the Redeemer, the Man of sorrows who on the Cross took upon himself human suffering and death.

With the sacrifice of his life, he redeemed human suffering and made it the fundamental means of salvation.

Dear sick people, entrust to the Lord the hardships and sorrows that you have to face and in his plan they will become a means of purification and redemption for the whole world.

Dear friends, I assure each and every one of you of my remembrance in prayer and, as I invoke Mary Most Holy, *Salus infirmorum - Health of the Sick* - so that she may protect you and your families, the directors, the doctors and the whole community of the Polyclinic, I impart to you all with affection a special Apostolic Blessing.

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