



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE SCIENTIFIC
AND THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES
OF THE PAUL VI INSTITUTE OF BRESCIA***

Saturday, 3 March 2007

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am pleased to welcome each one of you who belong to the Scientific Committee and to the Executive Committee of the Paul VI Institute, sponsored by Brescia's "Society for Christian Education" for the purpose of encouraging the study of the life, thought and work of this unforgettable Pontiff.

I greet you all cordially, starting with the Cardinals present. In particular, I greet Dr Giuseppe Camadini and thank him for the words he has addressed to me in his capacity as President of your Institute.

I then offer a special greeting to Bishop Giulio Sanguineti, Pastor of the Diocese in which my venerable Predecessor was born, baptized and ordained a priest. I am also grateful to him for all he does authoritatively to support and accompany the activity of such a praiseworthy Institute.

Thank you, dear friends, for offering me as a gift copies of all your publications to date. This is an immense series of volumes that testify to the considerable amount of work you have done in more than 25 years.

As was said, I too have had an opportunity to become acquainted with your Institute's activities. I have admired its faithfulness to the Magisterium as well as its intention to honour a great Pontiff, whose apostolic yearning you have made it your business to highlight by rigorous research work and high-grade scientific and ecclesial initiatives.

I feel closely and personally bound to the Servant of God Paul VI because of the trust he showed me in appointing me Archbishop of Munich and Freising in 1977 and, three months later, enrolling me in the College of Cardinals.

He was called by divine Providence to take the helm of the barque of Peter to steer her through a historical period marked by numerous challenges and problems.

In thinking back over the years of his Pontificate, it is striking to note the missionary zeal that motivated him and impelled him to undertake demanding Apostolic Journeys even to distant nations in order to make prophetic gestures of great ecclesial, missionary and ecumenical importance.

He was the first Pope to go to the Land where Christ lived and from which Peter set out on his journey to Rome. That Visit, only six months after his election as Supreme Pastor of the People of God and while the Second Vatican Council was underway, had a clear symbolic meaning. He showed the Church that the path of her mission is to follow in the footsteps of Christ.

This was precisely what Pope Paul VI sought to do during his Petrine ministry, which he always exercised with wisdom and prudence in complete fidelity to the Lord's command.

In fact, the secret of the pastoral action that Paul VI carried out with tireless dedication, at times adopting difficult and unpopular decisions, lies precisely in his love for Christ, a love vibrant with moving words to be found in all his teachings. His soul as a Pastor was totally consumed with missionary zeal, nourished by a sincere desire for dialogue with humanity. His prophetic invitation, several times repeated, to renew the world troubled by anxieties and violence through the "civilization of love", sprang from a total entrustment of himself to Jesus, Redeemer of man.

How can I forget, for example, the words I too heard in the Vatican Basilica, when I was taking part as an expert in the Second Vatican Council at the opening of the Second Session on 29 September 1963?

"Christ, our principle", Paul VI said with deep feeling, and I can still hear his voice, "Christ, our Way and our Guide! Christ, our hope and our destination.... No other light shines out at this meeting except for Christ's, Light of the world; no other truth than the words of the Lord, our one Teacher, concerns our hearts; no other aspiration guides us than the desire to be absolutely faithful to him" (*Teachings of Paul VI*, I [1963], 170-171). And until he drew his last breath, his thought, his energy and his action were for Christ and for the Church.

The name of this Pontiff, whose greatness public opinion understood on the occasion of his death, continues to be specially linked to the Second Vatican Council. If it was John XXIII who organized and inaugurated the Council, it was left to Paul VI, his Successor, to bring it to completion with an

expert, delicate and firm hand. The government of the Church in the post-conciliar period was equally exacting for Pope Montini.

Even when he had to tolerate suffering and sometimes violent attacks, he did not let himself be conditioned by misunderstanding and criticism, but on every occasion remained a firm and wise helmsman of the barque of Peter.

As the years pass, the importance of his Pontificate for the Church and for the world, and likewise, the value of his lofty Magisterium which has inspired his Successors and to which I too continue to refer, appear ever more clearly.

I therefore willingly take this opportunity today to pay him homage, as I encourage you, dear friends, to persevere with the work you started some time ago.

Making my own the exhortation addressed to you by our beloved Pope John Paul II, I gladly repeat to you: "Study Paul VI lovingly.... Study him with scientific thoroughness.... Study him with the conviction that his spiritual heritage continues to enrich the Church and can nourish the consciences of the men of today, who are so much in need of "words of eternal life" (*Address to the Scientific and the Executive Committee of the Paul VI Institute, 26 January 1980; L'Osservatore Romano English edition, 4 February, p. 15*).

Dear brothers and sisters, thank you once again for your visit; I assure you of my remembrance in prayer and I bless you with affection, and your families and all the projects of the Paul VI Institute of Brescia.

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