



# The Holy See

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## ***LETTER OF POPE JOHN PAUL II TO CARDINAL CAMILLO RUINI***

*To my Venerable Brother Cardinal Camillo Ruini  
President of the Italian Episcopal Conference,*

I was delighted to learn that on 8 September next, the Feast of the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the *Daily Prayer for Italy* will be resumed at the Holy House of Loreto, and the *Lamp for Italy* will be lit, so that its flame may symbolize the supplication of the Italian people.

The *Great Prayer for Italy* began in 1994, when my constant concern for the beloved Italian nation spurred me to extend the invitation to have prayer in the Church rise unceasingly to God (cf. Acts 12:5) in order to obtain the grace of the conversion of hearts, an essential condition for building a society of greater justice and solidarity. On 10 December of the same year, at the feet of Our Lady of Loreto, in deep fraternal communion with the Italian Bishops, in the presence of State authorities, I was able to celebrate the final phase of the unanimous response aroused by that appeal.

This new providential initiative, which in answer to that invitation has become the *Daily Prayer for Italy*, continues the supplication for peace and is a further opportunity to prepare ourselves to live the grace of the Jubilee, while turning our gaze with renewed and filial love to the One who in every region of the peninsula is venerated as a safe refuge in time of danger and as a gracious Mother to the supplications of all who suffer (cf. *Sub tuum praesidium*, in the *Roman Breviary*).

While the approach of the third millennium arouses unprecedented expectations and hopes, we look to Mary, the Lord's first disciple and the Teacher of wisdom, who helps us to interpret the events of history in total openness to the Word of the Lord. With her maternal support, the Italian people will thus be able more easily to discern "the signs of the times" and undertake with courage and perseverance the building of a society with an authentically human face and dimension.

The *Lamp for Italy*, which will shine every day in the Holy House, a place that recalls the mystery of the Word made flesh, will be the symbol of the Italian community's constant trust in the Mother of the Lord. At the same time it will serve as a reminder that it is the duty of Christians to watch always with their lamps lit (cf. Mt 25:1-13), persevering in prayer and in fidelity to the Gospel to illumine with the flame of Truth and the love of Christ the various social, political, cultural and

economic realities of life.

As I offer fervent wishes that this providential initiative will bear the desired fruits, I express my deep satisfaction and, in spiritual union with all who are gathered in the sacred shrine of Loreto, I willingly impart to Your Eminence, to Archbishop Angelo Comastri, to the Italian Bishops and to the faithful present at the sacred ceremony a special Apostolic Blessing, and gladly extend it to all the beloved Italian nation.

Castel Gandolfo, 6 August 1998.

**IOANNES PAULUS PP. II**

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