



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PILGRIMS FROM URUGUAY,
ITALY AND SWITZERLAND**

Saturday, 6 May 2000

Dear Brothers and Sisters from Uruguay!

1. I extend my cordial welcome to all of you who have come on pilgrimage to the Eternal City, the heart of Catholicism, thus experiencing a privileged moment of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. I affectionately greet all of you, Bishops, priests, men and women religious, consecrated persons and faithful who this morning celebrated Holy Mass at the tomb of the Apostle Peter, after having passed through the Holy Door of the Vatican Basilica. I thank Bishop Raúl Horacio Scarrone Carrero of Florida, President of the Uruguayan Episcopal Conference, for the cordial words he addressed to me.

My heart is still filled with memories of the Pastoral Visit I made to your country precisely 12 years ago. It was a great joy to be among you to enliven your faith, strengthen your hope and encourage your love. Your Jubilee pilgrimage also coincides with the anniversary of the death of Jacinto Vera, the first Bishop of Uruguay, who was able to bring, not without difficulty, the presence of the Church to every corner of the country.

I urge you, dear sons and daughters of Uruguay, to continue faithfully the mission that the Lord has entrusted to you and to give joyous witness to Christ in today's society. Your ecclesial journey will be strengthened by the celebration of the National Eucharistic Congress, scheduled for next October. I hope and wish that it will be a special moment of grace. In fact, the Saviour of the world, incarnated in the womb of the Virgin Mary 20 centuries ago, continues to be present in the sacrament of the Eucharist and to offer himself to all mankind as the source of divine life.

May God abundantly bless your efforts to be faithful to God and to the Church, and may you

always be accompanied by the maternal intercession of the Virgin of the Thirty-Three.

2. I now extend a cordial greeting to all of you, Italian-speaking pilgrims, who came today to visit me on the occasion of your Jubilee. My thanks first go to you, dear faithful from the Diocese of Arezzo-Cortona-Sansepolcro, present here with your Bishop, Gualtiero Bassetti. I extend my gratitude to him for the kind words he spoke to me. Today's testimony of affection, seven years since the visit I made to your land, fills me with great joy, because I cherish a vivid memory of the unforgettable 23 May 1993 that I spent with you in Cortona and Arezzo, when I was received by then-Bishop Giovanni D'Ascenzi, whom I am glad to see among those present today.

I wish to express my encouragement to your entire diocesan community, in particular to the priests and the consecrated men and women who are in direct contact with the life of the Church. I exhort them to continue generously in their commitment in accordance with that spirit of unity and mission which must distinguish the work of those whom God has sent into his vineyard. With similar affection I greet the lay faithful who, united with their Bishop, show the fruitfulness of their faith by living it in temporal affairs.

In preparation for the Great Jubilee, your Diocese reflected on the theme "I believe in the Church", stressing three key areas in which to carry out its activity: the Church proclaims the Word, celebrates grace and bears witness to charity. Dear brothers and sisters, continue courageously in this effort, bearing one another's burdens (cf. *Gal* 6: 2), so that the Church, as a well-structured body, may shine in the world as the first fruit of God's mercy and saving love for all mankind.

This spirit will sustain you in the necessary search for appropriate solutions to the problems and challenges you face. I am thinking, in particular, of the pastoral care of vocations, of continuing formation in parishes and associations, of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, of support for the many elderly priests and of the preparation of a new diocesan pastoral plan.

On your commitments I invoke the protection of Mary, venerated by you under the beautiful title of "Our Lady of Comfort", and of your holy protectors Donatus and Peter, John the Evangelist and Margaret of Cortona.

3. With no less affection I wish to extend my cordial greeting to you, dear faithful from the Diocese of Fiesole, who have come on pilgrimage to the tombs of the Apostles. I thank your Bishop, Luciano Giovannetti, for the cordial words he addressed to me. Through him my thoughts turn to the priests, the consecrated men and women and the lay faithful. I ask them all to continue courageously in their journey of bearing convinced Christian witness in the places where Providence has put them. I am aware that at your last Diocesan Synod you decided to give a Eucharistic character to your ecclesial journey, with special attention to the pastoral care of the family.

Dear people, the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 is a profoundly Eucharistic year. Rome itself, in the latter half of next month, will reflect with renewed gratitude on the great gift that Jesus left to us. Around the Eucharist, individuals, families, parishes and associations are strengthened and renewed. May you draw constantly from this inexhaustible source of interior life.

I ardently hope that your community will strive to participate actively and regularly in the Sunday assembly, in order to draw from it the necessary light and strength to respond according to the mind of Christ to the challenges that life presents to each one's vocation. On this journey may you be supported by the example and intercession of Holy Mary, our Mother, of the holy martyr Romulus and of all your patron saints.

4. I cordially greet the pilgrims who have come from Switzerland on the occasion of the swearing-in of the Pontifical Swiss Guard, in particular the *Union Instrumentale*, the *Contingent of the Fribourg Grenadiers* and the *Brass Band of Saint-Michel College*. This is an occasion for you to make a Jubilee pilgrimage, to pray for the young guards who have agreed to serve the Successor of Peter and thus have a particularly significant experience of ecclesial communion. Your musical and instrumental groups allow you to express your praise to the Creator through music. I extend a cordial greeting to all the young people who have accompanied you, inviting them to follow Jesus who wants to help them to have a happy life. May they all find in their stay in Rome support for their faith and their mission to be witnesses to Christ, as well as an encouragement to participate in the life of the Church! I warmly impart my Apostolic Blessing to you all.

5. I now extend a cordial greeting to the participants in the 20th "*Certamen Ciceronianum*" and I fervently hope that the study of the Latin language and its literature may be an effective tool for preserving and emphasizing the values associated with the culture of ancient Rome, mother of civilization and teacher of law.

Lastly, I greet the faithful from the parishes of Sts Nazarius and Celsus in Arosio, St Mary in Fabriago and Our Lady of the Assumption in Palazzolo sull'Oglio, the "Society of the Gospel" group from the Antonianum of Bologna, children and teachers from Rogasi High School in Pozzallo and the Mosè Mascolo School of the Gerardine Sisters of St Anthony Abbot, as well as a pilgrim group from Castelvetrano and the UNITALSI of Pesaro.

To each of you I extend my heartfelt encouragement always to follow Christ faithfully, to be his constant and joyous witnesses everywhere. I entrust you to the maternal protection of Mary, particularly venerated during this month of May, as I wholeheartedly bless you all.

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