



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE 12th LONG-DISTANCE CYCLE RACE FOR BLIND AND OTHER ITALIAN PILGRIM GROUPS

*Saturday, 3 June 2000 Dear Brothers and Sisters,*1. I greet you with great joy and thank you for your welcome visit. You come from various places and are united by a common desire to celebrate your Jubilee here in Rome, a city sanctified by the heroic witness of the Apostles Peter and Paul and of many other saints and martyrs. You have also wished to include this visit to the Successor of Peter in your Jubilee programme in order to strengthen your intentions of fidelity to Christ and his Church. Welcome! 2. I first greet the participants in the 12th long-distance tandem cycle race organized by the Italian Union of the Blind. Dear friends, your association is celebrating its 80th anniversary this year and has wished to mark this significant occasion with a demanding group sporting event, inspired by the great Jubilee values of brotherhood, solidarity and human advancement. To celebrate your Jubilee, you wanted above all to have a deep spiritual experience together. I very much appreciate your generous work in society, aimed at highlighting the courage, great spiritual gifts and strength of mind which the blind, thanks to the solidarity of the sighted, can express not only on the sports field but in many other areas of daily life. May the Lord give success to your praiseworthy intentions and bless all your good plans for helping your neighbour. Continue on this path "in tandem" and close communion with Jesus, our daily traveling companion through life. I next greet the faithful from Our Lady of Hope Parish in Cesena and Our Lady of Sorrows at the Cross Parish in Andria. Thank you for your visit, which is meant to bring me the affectionate spiritual support of all your brothers and sisters in the faith. After this Jubilee pilgrimage, go home with even greater determination to follow Christ our Lord and to proclaim and bear witness to his Gospel with generous missionary zeal. My thoughts now turn to you, dear Salesian alumni of Barcellona Pozzo di Gotto in the province of Messina, who have come to renew your profession of faith at the tomb of the Apostles.3. Dear brothers and sisters! This is the time of the Ascension and our thoughts are focused on Christ, who, at the end of his public mission, is returning to his heavenly Father. The liturgy reminds us that in these days Christ himself, with whom the Apostles had lived, taken meals and shared everyday toil, now remains invisibly present in his Church. It is the Church which must continue the work of the risen Lord, spreading his Gospel to every corner of the world until his glorious return. For this reason, in the account of the Ascension, after the Lord disappears from the sight of those present, angels invite the disciples not to stay gazing up to heaven. "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven" (*Acts 1: 11*). At that moment the time of witness began for all of us believers enlivened by the power of the Holy Spirit. And this week the Church turns in prayer to the divine Spirit, as she awaits the feast of Pentecost. By the power of this Holy Spirit, the glorified Christ, constituted universal Lord and Head of the Church, draws every man and woman to himself. We, the Christians of the third millennium, must also be witnesses and

messengers of Christ, called to generous missionary zeal and to building a new humanity enlivened by the law of love.⁴ The Acts of the Apostles tell us that on the days before Pentecost Mary, the Mother of Jesus, stayed with the Apostles in trembling expectation and persevering prayer. May the Blessed Virgin also accompany us, especially in this Jubilee Year, as we watch and pray in expectation of a new Pentecost. Today, the First Saturday of the month of June, let us entrust to her our intentions of evangelical commitment; let us ask her for the necessary help to accomplish the mission which has been entrusted to each of us. May she protect your families and the activities of your parishes and associations. I willingly assure you of a remembrance in prayer, as I cordially impart to each of you a special Apostolic Blessing, which I extend to all your loved ones.

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