



The Holy See

REMARKS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II AT THE END OF THE ANNUAL LENTEN SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Saturday, 18 March 2000 At the end of the spiritual exercises, I thank the Lord who has given me the joy of sharing these days of grace and prayer with you, dear and venerable brothers of the Roman Curia. These were days of intense and prolonged listening to the Spirit, who spoke to our hearts in silence and in attentive meditation on the Word of God. These days have been a powerful community experience, which has enabled us to feel like the Apostles in the Upper Room: "Together they devoted themselves to constant prayer [with] Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers" (*Acts* 1:14). On behalf of each of you I also thank Archbishop François Xavier Nguyễn Văn Thuận, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, who, with simplicity and spiritual inspiration, led us in reflection on our vocation as witnesses to Gospel hope at the beginning of the third millennium. He himself was a witness to the Cross in the long years of his imprisonment in Việt Nam and he frequently recounted to us facts and episodes of his sufferings in prison, thereby strengthening us in the consoling certainty that when everything collapses around us and perhaps even within us, Christ remains our unfailing support. We are grateful to Archbishop Van Thuận — in prison he was merely Mr Van Thuận — for his witness, which is particularly significant in this Jubilee Year. The crucified and risen Christ is our only true hope. Strong in his help, his disciples also become men and women of hope. Not a fleeting, short-lived hope which later leaves the human heart tired and disappointed, but true hope, God's gift, which, sustained from on high, reaches for the supreme Good and is certain of achieving it. Today's world also has urgent need of this hope. The Great Jubilee we are celebrating leads us step by step to have a deeper sense of the reasons for this Christian hope, which call for and foster a growing trust in God and an ever more generous openness to our brothers and sisters. May Mary, Mother of Hope, whom the preacher invited us last evening to see as a model of the Church, obtain for us the joy of hope so that, like the travelers on the road to Emmaus, Christ's presence in our moments of trial will change our sadness into joy. "Tristitia vostra vertetur in gaudium". With these sentiments, I cordially bless you and ask all of you to continue to accompany me with your prayer, especially during the pilgrimage to the Holy Land which, please God, I will have the joy of making next week. © Copyright 2000 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana