



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE MEMBERS OF THE ITALIAN PRO-LIFE MOVEMENT

Thursday, 22 May 2003

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. I am grateful to you for coming and greet you with affection. I greet the members of the Executive Council of the [Italian] Pro-Life Movement and especially the President, Hon. Mr Carlo Casini. I thank him for his words on behalf of those present. I greet each one of you and through you, the volunteers and all the members of your Sodality which has opened numerous centres to assist life and homes for care in every region of Italy.

For 25 years - that is, since 22 May 1978 when abortion was legalized in Italy - your association has never ceased to work to protect human life, one of the key values of the civilization of love.

2. It is not the first time that I have had the opportunity to meet you. In these years, in fact, I have had various contacts with your Movement. I recall in particular the visit I made to Florence in 1986 to the first pro-life centre to be set up in Italy. Moreover, on various occasions I have expressed my appreciation of your activities and encouraged you to do your utmost to make the right to life known to all. I renew these sentiments now, at the time when the mandate of your Executive Council is ending and in view of the forthcoming meeting scheduled for the beginning of June at which policies will be outlined for your future actions.

Please God you may continue, closely united with one another, to be a force of renewal and hope in our society. May the Lord help you to work ceaselessly to enable all, believers and non-believers alike, to understand that protection of human life from conception is an essential condition for building a future worthy of the human being.

3. On receiving the Nobel Prize for Peace, venerable Mother Teresa of Calcutta, whom you

consider the spiritual president of the pro-life movements in the world, had the courage to say to the leaders of political communities: "If we let a mother kill the fruit of her womb, what is left to us? It is the principle of abortion that endangers peace in the world".

It is true! There can be no true peace without respect for life, especially if it is innocent and defenceless as is that of the unborn child. Elementary coherence requires those who seek peace to safeguard life. No pro-peace activity can be effective unless attacks on life at all its stages, from conception until natural death, are as energetically opposed. Thus, your movement is not only a Pro-Life Movement but also an authentic peace Movement, precisely because of your constant effort to protect life.

4. Recurrent threats put unborn life at peril. The praiseworthy desire to have a child sometimes exceeds acceptable limits. Embryos produced in excessive numbers, selected and frozen, are submitted to destructive experimentation and destined to die in line with a premeditated decision.

Conscious of the need for a law to defend the rights of children who have been conceived, you are committed as a Movement to getting the Italian Parliament to pass a law which respects as fully as possible the rights of unborn children, regardless of whether they have been conceived using artificial methods that are in themselves morally unacceptable. I take this opportunity to express the hope that the legislative process under way will quickly reach a conclusion and that it will go by the principle that whenever a decision is to be made between the desires of adults and the rights of children, it will be made in the interests of children.

5. Never be discouraged and never tire, dear brothers and sisters, of proclaiming and witnessing to the Gospel of life; may you be beside the families and mothers in difficulty. I renew, especially to you women, my invitation to defend the alliance between women and life, and to "promote a 'new feminism' which rejects the temptation of imitating models of 'male domination' in order to acknowledge and affirm the true genius of women in every aspect of the life of society, and overcome all discrimination, violence and exploitation" (*[Evangelium Vitae](#)*, n. 99).

God will never let you lack the help you need to conclude your many activities satisfactorily, if you turn to him with intense and constant prayer. I also assure you of my spiritual closeness and, as I invoke the motherly protection of Mary, I impart to you, to your families and to your movement a special Blessing.