



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO VIGEVANO AND PAVIA (ITALY)

*ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE YOUTH AND SICK OF THE DIOCESE*

*Balcony of the Bishopric
Sant' Ambrogio Square, Vigevano
Saturday, 21 April 2007*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am pleased to be with you and I thank you for your cordial and festive welcome. As I emerged from the helicopter, it was almost as if I heard the echo of the bells of all the churches in the Diocese pealing joyfully as they offered me a unanimous greeting. I am grateful to you for this gesture of affection.

My first meeting was with the school children and those who belong to sports associations, who had come to welcome me at the municipal stadium. Then along the way, I saw multitudes of people. Thank you to each and every one.

I wanted to begin my Pastoral Pilgrimage in Italy here in Vigevano, the only Lombard Diocese that my Predecessor John Paul II did not visit.

Thus, it is as though I were starting out afresh on the path he trod to continue proclaiming to the men and women of beloved Italy the announcement, old and ever new, which rings out with special clarity in this Easter Season: Christ is risen! Christ is alive! Christ is with us today and for ever!

I greet the Mayor of this City whom I thank for his courteous words of welcome on behalf of the civic community. I express my heartfelt thanks to all who cooperated in various ways in the

arrangement and organization of my Visit, for which you prepared yourselves in particular by prayer.

I address a special thought to the Sisters, Perpetual Adorers of the Most Blessed Sacrament, whom I have just met; their praying presence is an everlasting reminder to the entire Diocese to be increasingly aware of the importance of the Eucharist, the centre and summit of the life of the Church. I reach out with my encouragement and gratitude to these beloved Sisters, who have consecrated their entire lives to the Lord.

I then greet the sick and, as I speak to you who are present here, I extend my thoughts to all the people in the villages and towns of the Diocese who are suffering, in difficulty or marginalized. May the motherly protection of the Blessed Virgin sustain and comfort each one of you in times of trial.

I address a special greeting to you, dear young people who have gathered in this square, as I embrace in spirit all the young people of Vigevano and Lomello. Dear friends, the Risen Christ renews to each one of you his invitation to follow him. Do not hesitate to entrust yourselves to him: meet him, listen to him, love him with all your heart; in friendship with him you will experience the true joy that gives meaning and value to life.

Dear brothers and sisters, I would gladly have accepted the invitation to extend my stay in your Diocese, but it is impossible for me to do so; thus, I enclose in a warm embrace every inhabitant of this City and of the Vicariates of Mortara, Garlasco, Mede and Cava Manara. In a little while, we will all be gathered in spirit around the altar for the solemn Eucharistic concelebration, and we will pray that the Risen Lord will ensure that the Visit of the Successor of Peter will inspire renewed religious fervour in every member of your diocesan Community. With this greeting, I cordially impart a special Apostolic Blessing to you all.

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