



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT

OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

TO SAVONA AND GENOA (LIGURIA) VISIT TO THE "GIANNINA GASLINI" PAEDIATRIC HOSPITAL ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI Genoa

Sunday, 18 May 2008 *Madam Mayor,*

Mr Extraordinary Commissioner,

Dear Children,

Dear Brothers and Sisters, After praying at the foot of the Madonna della Guardia in the beautiful Shrine that overlooks the City, my first Meeting is with you, in this place of suffering and hope which was inaugurated on 15 May 1938, exactly 70 years ago. I embrace you, dearest children who are admitted to and cared for with attention and love in this Hospital, "a place of excellence" for paediatrics at the service of Genoa, Italy, and the entire Mediterranean area. Your spokesperson has expressed to me your sentiments of affection, which I warmly reciprocate and accompany with a special thought for your parents too. A cordial greeting to Mrs Marta Vincenzi, Mayor of Genoa, who has expressed the City's welcome. I greet Prof. Vincenzo Lorenzelli, Extraordinary Commissioner of the "Giannina Gaslini" Institute who has recalled this Hospital's aims and the future developments planned. The Gaslini project was born in the heart of a generous benefactor, the industrialist and Senator Gerolamo Gaslini, who dedicated this institute to his daughter who died when she was only 12 years old. It is part of the history of charity which makes Genoa a "city of Christian charity". Today too, faith inspires in many people of good will acts of love and material support for this Institute, which, with justifiable pride, the Genoese regard as a precious patrimony. I thank you all and encourage you to continue. In particular, I rejoice at the new complex whose foundation stone was laid recently and which has found a munificent donor. The effective, cordial attention of the public Administration is also a sign of recognition for the social value of the Gaslini institute for the children of the City and beyond. Indeed, when a good is destined for all it deserves the contribution of all, with the proper respect for roles and competence. I now address you, dear doctors, researchers, paramedical and administrative staff; and you, dear chaplains, volunteers and all who are involved in offering spiritual assistance to the small patients and their relatives. I know that you are unanimously committed to ensuring that the Gaslini Institute is an authentic "sanctuary of life" and a "sanctuary of the family", where workers in every sector combine loving attention for the person with their professionalism. The decision of the Founder, who held that the President of the Foundation must be the *pro-tempore* Archbishop of

Genoa, expresses the wish that the Christian inspiration of the Institute may never be lacking and that everyone may always be sustained by the Gospel values. In 1931, when he was laying the foundations of the structure, Senator Gerolamo Gaslini predicted "the perennial work of good that must shine out from the Institute itself". Hence your Hospital's aim is to radiate goodness through the loving care of sick children. Therefore, while I thank all the personnel - managerial, administrative and medical - for their professionalism and dedicated service, I express the hope that this excellent Paediatric Institute may continue to develop its technologies, treatments and services, but also to extend its horizons increasingly in that perspective of positive globalization for which resources, services and needs are recognized, creating and reinforcing a network of solidarity that is so urgently needed today. And all this must never lack that supplement of affection which the little patients feel to be as important as the indispensable treatment. The Hospital will then become ever more a place of hope. Hope at the Gaslini institute is expressed in the care of paediatric patients, for whom help is provided through the continuous formation of health-care workers. In fact, as an esteemed Institute for scientific research and treatment, your Hospital is known for being monothematic and multifunctional, covering almost all the specializations in the paediatric sector. Hence the hope that is fostered here is well-founded. Yet, to face the future effectively, it is indispensable that this hope be sustained by a loftier vision of life that enables the scientist, the doctor, the professional, the nurse and the parents themselves to devote all their capacities, sparing no efforts to obtain the best results that science and technology can offer today at the level of prevention and treatment. Then comes the thought of God's silent presence which, almost imperceptibly, accompanies the human being on his long journey through history. True "dependable" hope is God alone, who in Jesus Christ and in his Gospel opened wide the dark door of time to the future. "I am risen and now I am always with you", Jesus repeats to us, especially at the most difficult moments: "my hand supports you. Wherever you might fall, you will fall into my arms. I am present even at the threshold of death". It is children who are treated here at the Gaslini institute. How is it possible not to recall Jesus' special love for children? He wanted them beside him, he pointed them out to the Apostles as models to follow in their spontaneous, generous faith, in their innocence. With harsh words he warned people against despising or shocking them. He was moved by the widow of Nain, a mother who had lost her son, her only son. The Evangelist Luke wrote that the Lord reassured her and said to her: "Do not weep" (cf. Lk 7: 13). Still today Jesus repeats these comforting words to those in pain: "Do not weep". He shows solidarity to each one of us and asks us if we want to be his disciples, to bear witness to his love for anyone who gets into difficulty. Lastly, I address you, dearest children, to repeat to you that the Pope loves you. I see your relatives beside you, who share with you moments of anxiety and hope. You may all rest assured: God never abandons us. Stay united to him and you will never lose your calm, not even in the darkest and most difficult moments. I assure you of my remembrance in prayer and entrust you to Mary Most Holy who, as a Mother, suffered for the sufferings of her divine Son but now dwells with him in glory. I thank each one of you again for this meeting, which will remain impressed on my heart. I bless you all with affection.

