



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
AFTER A HOLY MASS TO COMMEMORATE THE 50th ANNIVERSARY
OF THE ELECTION OF BLESSED POPE JOHN XXIII**

St Peter's Basilica

Tuesday, 28 October 2008

*Your Eminence, Cardinal Secretary of State,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I am pleased to be able to share with you this act of tribute to [Bl. John XXIII](#), my beloved Predecessor, on the anniversary of his election to the Chair of Peter. I congratulate you on the initiative and thank the Lord who has granted us to relive the announcement of great joy (*gaudium magnum*) that rang out 50 years ago on this day and at this time from the Loggia of the Vatican Basilica. It was a prelude and prophecy of the *experience of fatherhood* that God was to offer us in abundance through the words, acts and ecclesial service of the Good Pope. God's grace was preparing a demanding and promising season for the Church and society, and in the docility to the Spirit that distinguished the entire life of [John XXIII](#) it found the good soil in which concord, hope, unity and peace would germinate for the good of all of humanity. Pope John pointed to faith in Christ and belonging to the Church, *Mother and Teacher*, as a guarantee of a fruitful Christian witness in the world. Thus, in the strong contrasts of his time, the Pope was a man and pastor of peace who was able to open in the East and in the West unexpected horizons of brotherhood between Christians and of dialogue with all.

The Diocese of Bergamo is celebrating and could not miss a spiritual encounter with her most illustrious son, "a brother who became father through the will of Our Lord" as he himself said. His venerable mortal remains repose beside the *Confessio* of the Apostle Peter. From this place dear to all the baptized, he repeats: "*I am Joseph, your brother*". You have come to reaffirm your common ties and the faith that opens them to a truly catholic dimension. For this reason you have wished to meet the Bishop of Rome, as universal Father. You are led by your Pastor, Bishop

Roberto Amadei, accompanied by the Auxiliary Bishop. I am grateful to Bishop Amadei for his kind words on behalf of all and to each one I extend the expression of my gratitude for the affection and devotion that enliven you. I feel encouraged by your prayers, as I urge you to follow the example and teaching of the Pope, your fellow-citizen. The Servant of God John Paul II beatified him, recognizing that the traces of his holiness as *father* and *pastor* were continuing to shine before the whole human family.

At the Holy Mass at which the Cardinal Secretary of State presided, the Word of God welcomed you and led you in the perfect grace of Christ to the Father. In him we encounter the Saints and Blesseds and all those who have preceded us in the sign of faith. Their heritage is placed in our hands. The [Second Vatican Ecumenical Council](#) was a truly special gift, offered to the Church by John XXIII, who decided, prepared and inaugurated it. We are all committed to accepting this gift appropriately, continuing to meditate on its teachings and applying its active guidelines in life. You yourselves have endeavoured to do this in these years, as individuals and as a diocesan community. In particular, you have recently been engaged in the Diocesan Synod on the parish: in it you returned to the Conciliar sources to draw from them that extra light and warmth that is proving necessary in order to restore the parish to a living and dynamic structure of the diocesan community. It is in the parish that one learns to actually live out one's faith. This makes it possible to keep alive the rich tradition of the past and to re-propose its values in a secularized social milieu that is frequently hostile or indifferent. Thinking precisely of such situations, Pope John said in his Encyclical *Pacem in terris*: the believer "must be a glowing point of light in the world, a nucleus of love, a leaven of the whole mass. He will be so in proportion to his degree of spiritual union with God" (n. 164). This was the great Pontiff's life programme and it can become the ideal of every believer and every Christian community that knows how to draw from the Eucharistic celebration, from the fount of the gratuitous, faithful and merciful love of the Risen Crucified One.

Allow me to place a special emphasis on the family, the central subject of ecclesial life, the womb of education in the faith and the irreplaceable cell of social life. In this regard the future Pope John wrote in a letter to his relatives: *"The education that leaves the deepest traces is always that provided at home. I have forgotten much of what I have read in books but I still remember very clearly all that I learned from my parents and from the elderly"* (20 December 1932). In particular, in the family's daily life one learns to live the fundamental Christian precept of love. This is precisely why the Church counts on the family, whose mission it is to express everywhere, through her children, *"the fullness of Christian charity, than which nothing is more effective in eradicating the seeds of discord, nothing more efficacious in promoting concord, just peace and the brotherly unity of all"* (*Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*).

To conclude, returning to the parish, the theme of your Diocesan Synod, you are acquainted with Pope [John XXIII's](#) solicitude for this body that is so important in ecclesial life. With great confidence Pope Roncalli entrusted to the parish, the family of families, the task of nourishing sentiments of communion and brotherhood among the faithful. Formed by the Eucharist, the

parish will be able to become he thought a leaven of healthy restlessness in the widespread consumerism and individualism of our time, reawakening solidarity and opening in faith the eye of the heart to recognize the Father, who is love freely given and who desires to share his own joy with his children.

Dear friends, the image of Our Lady that Pope John received as a gift on his visit to Loreto, a few days before the opening of the Council, has accompanied you to Rome. He wanted the statue to be set in his home diocese's Diocesan Seminary, named after him. I am glad to see there are many seminarians who are enthusiastic about their vocation. I willingly entrust to the Mother of God all the families and parishes, proposing to them the model of the Holy Family of Nazareth: may they be the first seminary and know how to develop in their own milieus vocations to the priesthood, to the mission, to religious consecration and to family life according to the Heart of Christ. In a famous Visit during the first months of his Pontificate, the Blessed asked those listening to him what they thought the meaning of the meeting was and he proceeded to answer his own question: *"The Pope's eyes have met yours and he has placed his heart beside your heart"* (On his first Christmas as Pope, 1958). I pray Pope John to grant us to experience the closeness of his gaze and his heart, so that we may truly feel like *God's family*.

With these hopes, I willingly impart my affectionate Blessing to the pilgrims from Bergamo, particularly to those from Sotto il Monte, the native town of the Blessed Pontiff, which I once had the joy to visit years ago, as well as to the Authorities, the Roman and Eastern faithful who are present here, and to all your loved ones.

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