



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CIRCLE OF ST PETER**

Hall of Popes

Friday, 3 April 2009

Dear Members of the Circle of St Peter,

With genuine pleasure, I meet you and offer each one of you my cordial greeting, which I gladly extend to your relatives and to all those who work with you in the different activities organized by your praiseworthy sodality. I greet in particular Duke Leopoldo Torlonia, President General, whom I thank for his words expressing your common sentiments, and your Chaplain, Mons. Franco Camaldo. This occasion gives me the opportunity to renew my deep appreciation of your service to the Pope and of the contribution you offer to the Christian community of Rome, especially by meeting the needs of so many of our poor and needy brethren. I thank you because with these initiatives of human and evangelical solidarity you make present, in a certain way, the Successor of Peter's concern for those who are experiencing particularly hard conditions.

We know that the authenticity of our fidelity to the Gospel is also confirmed by the attention and practical concern that we strive to show to our neighbour, especially to the weakest and most marginalized. Thus charitable service, which can be expressed in a multiplicity of ways, becomes a privileged form of evangelization in light of Jesus' teaching which maintains that what we do to our brethren we do to him, especially to those who are "lowly", and neglected (cf. Mt 25: 40). Then, so that our service, however useful and praiseworthy, is not solely philanthropic action, it must be nourished by constant prayer and trust in God. It is necessary to harmonize our gaze with Christ's gaze, our heart with his heart. In this way, loving support offered to others is expressed in a sympathetic participation in and sharing of their hopes and sufferings, making visible and, I would say, almost tangible on the one hand God's infinite mercy to every human being and on the other, our faith in him. In dying on the Cross Jesus, the Only Begotten Son of God, revealed to us the Father's merciful love that is the source of true brotherhood among all human beings and showed us the only possible way to become credible witnesses of this Love.

In a few days, in Holy Week, we shall have the opportunity to intensely relive the supreme manifestation of divine love. We shall once again be able to immerse ourselves in the mysteries of the sorrowful Passion and glorious Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. May the Easter Triduum be for each one of you, dear brothers and sisters, a favourable opportunity to strengthen and purify your faith; and to open yourselves to the contemplation of the Cross which is a mystery of infinite love from which to draw strength to make your life a gift to your brethren. "The Cross of Christ", Pope St Leo the Great wrote, is "the fountain of all blessings, it is the cause of all graces" (cf. *Serm. 8 on the Lord's Passion*, 6-8). From the Cross also flows joy and heartfelt peace which testify to that hope for which a great need is felt in this time of a widespread and generalized financial crisis. And the various charitable initiatives of your praiseworthy Circle of St Peter will be eloquent signs of this hope, as well as your own example, if you let yourselves be guided by Christ's Spirit.

Dear friends, as you do every year, you have come today to present to me [Peter's Pence](#) which you have collected in the parishes of Rome. Thank you for this sign of ecclesial communion and practical participation in the financial efforts the Apostolic See is making to meet the increasing and urgent needs of the Church, especially in the earth's poorest countries. I would like once again to express my deep appreciation of your service that is motivated by convinced faithfulness and loyalty to the Successor of Peter. May the Lord reward you and fill your Circle with Blessings; may he help each one of you to fulfil your Christian vocation completely, in the family, at work and within your Association. May the Blessed Virgin accompany and sustain with her motherly protection your resolutions and praiseworthy projects. For my part, I assure you of my prayers for you who are present here, for all the members and volunteers, as well as for those who support you in your various activities and those whom you meet in your daily apostolate. With these sentiments I impart to you a special Apostolic Blessing, which I extend with pleasure to your families and to your loved ones.

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