



## The Holy See

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VISIT TO THE PARISH OF "SAN BASILIO" IN ROME **HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II** 11 March 1979 *Beloved Brothers and Sisters*, 1. First of all, I wish to greet you all cordially. The visit to your parish gives me the possibility of formulating this greeting personally and also of receiving your personal response. This greeting and this response come from *awareness of that particular unity that we form in the Church of Jesus Christ, and especially in the diocese of Rome*. Greeting one another, we express this unity which has a value that is not alone "organizational". Your parish, the parish of S. Basilio, is not only an essential part of the whole diocese of Rome but takes its place authentically in that unity which is the Church. Made famous, here in Rome, by St Peter and St Paul, she is set up by the Apostles of Christ the Lord, and is rooted in a particular way in the "foundation" of our salvation which is Christ (cf. 1 Cor 3:10, 11) and in faith in him. That foundation is such that no other exists outside it, and "no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid" (1 Cor 3: 11). "There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." 2. In the spirit of this unity I extend to you my greeting, and I receive yours, your response, which is a response of faith. It is particularly significant at the time of Lent, in which we all live more deeply the very *reality of our "growth" on the foundation of Jesus Christ, of his passion and death, of his redemption*. Here, in Rome, the traces of this "growth" based on Christ are particularly strong and eloquent. On the occasion of this meeting of ours, I greet the Cardinal Vicar, and Bishop Oscar Zanera who is making a longer and more thorough visit to your parish in this period. I greet your Pastors, the priests who are working in your midst, the Sisters, the various pastoral collaborators, all the parishioners, also those present today, and in particular those who form the various groups of ecclesial commitment. All together, you can offer a more and more luminous Christian testimony in this beloved district of the outskirts of Rome, which still needs many interventions to improve the quality of life. Today I wish, together with you all, to live, on the second Sunday of Lent, the particular grace of this meeting in faith, which is the visit of the Bishop to the parish. 3. This is a meeting in faith, the content of which is specified by the word of God in the liturgy of today. A strong, deep, and essential content. Listening to St Paul's letter to the Romans, we find at once the key-reality of faith. "If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn? Is it Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us?" (Rom 8:31-34). God is with us! God is with man! With humanity. The only and complete proof of this is and always remains the following: "He did not spare his own Son but gave

him up for us all" (Rom 8:32). In order to emphasize this truth even more, the liturgy refers to the book of Genesis: to the sacrifice of Isaac. When God asked Abraham for this offering. He wished in a certain way to prepare the conscience of the elect People for the sacrifice that his Son would carry out. God spared Isaac and also spared the heart of his Father Abraham. But "He did not spare his own Son!" Abraham became "the father of our faith", because, with his readiness to sacrifice his son Isaac, he heralded the sacrifice of Christ, which is a peak-moment along the ways of faith of the whole of mankind. We are all aware of this. This consciousness brings new life to our souls, particularly during Lent. This consciousness moulds our Christian life from its deepest roots. It moulds it from beginning to end. God is with us through the cross of his Son. And this cross is also the first source of our spiritual strength. When the Apostle asks: "if God is for us, who is against us?", with this question he embraces everything and all those who can be a danger for our spirit, for our salvation. "Who is to condemn? Is it Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us?." (Rom 8: 34). From faith in Christ, in his cross and resurrection, *hope is born*. Great trust! Let it be our strength, especially in the difficult moments of life.<sup>4</sup> My thought and my word go especially to all those who are in difficulties of various kinds: to those who are suffering in the body and the spirit; to those who are going through trials of a social character, such as negative experiences at work or misunderstandings in the family; to those young people who are perhaps going through a moment of crisis; to those who are tackling with commitment difficulties of a pastoral nature, such as lack of understanding or indifference to spiritual values and resistance to the Holy Spirit. In Christ, everyone has the right to hope. In the Gospel, of today we find a particular manifestation of that hope which is born from faith in Jesus Christ, Just at the time of Lent the Church reads to us again the Gospel of the *Transfiguration of the Lord*. This event, in fact, took place for the purpose of preparing the Apostles for the difficult ordeals of Gethsemane, the Passion, the humiliation of the scourging, of the crowning with thorns, of the *Via Crucis*, of Calvary. In this perspective Jesus wanted to show the Apostles closest to him the splendour of the glory that shines forth in him, which the Father confirms with the voice from above, revealing his divine sonship and his Mission: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him" (Mt 17:5). The splendour of the glory of the Transfiguration embraces nearly the whole of the old Covenant and arrives at the astounded eyes of the Apostles who were to become teachers of that faith from which hope is born; of those Apostles, who were to proclaim the whole mystery of Christ. "Lord, it is well that we are here" (Mt 17:4), Peter, James and John exclaim, as if they wanted to say: You are the incarnation of the hope to which the human soul and the human body aspires! A hope that is stronger than the cross and Calvary! A hope that dispels the darkness of our existence, of sin, of death. It is well that we are here: with you! May your parish be and become more and more the place, the community where men, understanding the mystery of Christ more and more deeply by means of faith, will acquire more confidence, more awareness of the value and meaning of life, and will repeat to Christ: "It is well that we are here," with you. Here, in this temple. Before this tabernacle. And not just here, but perhaps in a hospital bed; perhaps at places of work; at table in the community of the family. Everywhere. The Mission will take place in your parish in October next. It is a question of a special gift from the Lord in this year which is the twenty-fifth anniversary

of the foundation of your parish community. A great many Capuchin Fathers, other groups of religious and laity, together with the priests of the parish, will try to contact personally all the faithful, to proclaim the message of Jesus in its purity and to help each of you to put it into practice fully in your own everyday life, with generosity, commitment and enthusiasm. Many contemplative souls are already praying and sacrificing themselves for this marvellous spiritual initiative, which, I do not doubt, will yield abundant fruits of grace. I too add my prayer to the Lord that all the members of this parish may respond with full availability to the mysterious invitation of the Holy Spirit, who will make people hear his pressing appeal to live a really new life in Christ, transfigured in him.

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