



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
TO ARCHBISHOP SERAFINO SPROVIERI
FOR THE CONCLUSION OF THE DIOCESAN
EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS OF BENEVENTO**

1. I have learned with joy that your archdiocese concludes the celebration of the Eucharistic Congress with particular solemnity on the *Feast of Corpus Christi*. Through Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, who will preside at the celebration, I wish to convey my cordial greeting to you, Archbishop Sprovieri, and to the beloved Church of Benevento, so deeply united with the See of Peter. I recall the visit I was able to make to the ecclesial community of Benevento 12 years ago, and as I remember with gratitude Archbishop Carlo Minchiatti, your predecessor, I recall my visit to the new seminary that I blessed.

With you, venerable Brother, I greet the priests, the religious, the members of Catholic Action and of the ecclesial associations and movements, and the whole Christian community which, under your enlightened guidance, faces courageously the challenges of post-modernity. I join with affection those who have gathered in the largest square in the city, for the solemn concluding concelebration and consecration to Christ, the seal of the entire congress. I encourage everyone to offer to "the Lord of lords" a sincere heart and a renewed soul, entrusting themselves to him with firm hope.

2. I know that this intense week of celebrations was observed with many initiatives, following the guidelines and suggestions of the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte*. I congratulate you, the clergy, religious and faithful of this ancient particular Church, and hope that you will all continue on the journey you began with the Great Jubilee "not only as a remembrance of the past, but also as a prophecy of the future" (n. 3). Everything must be made to converge on the Tabernacle, the new "tent of meeting" and a very appropriate place to contemplate "until the heart truly falls in love" (*ibid.*, n. 33), the face of the Lord, the sorrowful face of the crucified Christ "which conceals the life of God and offers salvation to the world" (*ibid.*, n. 28); the glorious face of the risen Christ in which the Church, "the Bride, contemplates her treasure and her joy" (*ibid.*).

I want to repeat to you today what I said at the beginning of my Pontificate: "Christ is the Redeemer of man!". He who remains the same for all ages (cf. Heb 13,8) is truly the only Saviour of mankind, for "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4,12). Therefore Christian life can only develop starting from him. Every day we must "set out anew from Christ", aiming at a high standard of evangelical life, bringing alive a "true and proper pedagogy of holiness" (cf. *Novo Millennio ineunte*, n. 31).

3. Church of Benevento, gathered around Christ living in the Eucharist! Persevere constantly and generously in the promise of weekly adoration of the Eucharist which you have recently resumed, bringing to life many, well-attended "schools of prayer" to which you can call and welcome the young people who are eager to find in Christ their companion on the journey of life. Make the most of the "centres for listening" and exchanging the faith in the Eucharistic mystery with your brothers and sisters in the faith, mobilizing families so that they take up their responsibility for the difficult but indispensable mission of educating their children in the faith. Redouble your care and your witness of solidarity to the sick and the elderly, the poor and the excluded, involving each one in a crusade of prayer for the triumph of Christ and of his Church.

Church of Benevento! Work to put into practice what I suggested to the entire People of God about the central place of the Eucharist, doing your utmost to restore ever greater fervour to the community celebration of the Sunday Eucharist (cf. *Novo Millennio ineunte*, n. 35), to restore the "Lord's Day" as "the Day of the Church and of the human person" drawing from it a new inspiration of communion for the members of the ecclesial community, who will then be readier to intervene effectively to confront the many forms of poverty in the territory with many programmes of solidarity and concrete charity.

Church of Benevento! Be a true and proper "Eucharistic community" that works to recover those who are "distant", through the daily work of the "chain of messengers". This is a particularly timely initiative for achieving the reconversion of the environment, reclaiming Sannio and Irpinia from the remaining pockets of superstition and inadequate religious practices.

4. Beloved Church of Benevento! May Our Lady of Grace and the many saints who watch over you - from St Bartholomew Apostle to St Januarius and St Barbatus, from St Pompilius to St Giuseppe Moscati and St Alberico Crescitelli, to St Pio of Pietrelcina - help you continue with renewed zeal on your journey of faith and witness to the eternal Christian values. May they obtain for you many holy vocations to the priesthood and to a life of special consecration, so that your children will always have with them those who break the bread of the Word and of the Eucharist!

With these sentiments and wishes, I gladly impart to Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the bearer of this Message, to you, venerable Brother, and to the clergy, the men and women religious, the seminarians, the civil authorities, responsible for the future progress of this region, and the beloved community of Benevento the desired Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 1 June 2002.

JOHN PAUL II

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