



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PILGRIMS FROM THE DIOCESE OF SAINT CLOUD
IN MINNESOTA**

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 6 April 1989*

Dear Bishop Hanus,

Dear Friends in Christ,

I am very pleased to welcome you here during your *pilgrimage* to Rome as part of the centenary celebrations of the *Diocese of Saint Cloud*. The joy of this occasion is increased by our recent celebration of the Easter mysteries. May the Risen Christ fill your hearts with wonder and praise for all the mighty deeds that God has accomplished in your Diocese over the past hundred years. With the Psalmist we can say: "Forever will I sing the favors of the Lord" (*Ps.* 89, 1).

Your anniversary celebrations include this pilgrimage to the tombs of the Apostles: Saint Peter, upon whom the Lord built his Church, and Saint Paul, the Apostle to the nations. Faith tells us that we enjoy a living communion with these Apostles, these pillars of the Roman Church. You have also come to see the Successor of Peter, who is the lasting and visible source and foundation of the unity of the Bishops and all God's people (Cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, 23). I am confident that our meeting today will strengthen the bonds of unity, charity and peace that link the Church in Saint Cloud to the universal Church spread throughout the world.

While we commemorate the establishment of the Diocese of Saint Cloud by my predecessor Pope Leo XIII, we realize that the origins of the Church in central Minnesota go back much further. One thinks of the pioneering efforts of priests like Father Francis Pierz, a Slovenian missionary, whose love for the Gospel was such that at the age of sixty-seven he began working among the native Americans of Minnesota. His enthusiastic efforts prepared the way for various groups of men and women religious. Of these special mention must be made of the Benedictines of Saint John's

Abbey, who have played a prominent role in the life of your Diocese over the years.

Nor can I fail to mention the intrepid Catholic pioneers of various nationalities who brought the faith with them to America. They persevered in the face of much adversity so that you, their descendants, might enjoy the blessings of religion as well as the many material benefits your country has to offer. I join you then in thanking God for all the priests, men and women religious and laity who have sowed the good seed of the Gospel in Saint Cloud over the past century.'

Dear brothers and sisters: Today you face new challenges in living the Gospel and in bringing it to others. With the example of your parents and grandparents before you, I urge you to hold fast to your Catholic faith. See in every circumstance an opportunity to grow in that holiness which is the supreme vocation of every baptized person. Work to transform your society from within in accordance with the truth that Christ has entrusted to the Church for the salvation of all.

I commend all of you to the loving protection of Mary, who under the title of her Immaculate Conception is the Patroness of the United States. May she intercede for you in the great work of making her Son better known and loved in today's world. To all of you and to your families at home I willingly impart my Apostolic Blessing.

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