



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE "UNITED BIBLE SOCIETIES"**

Hall of Popes

Thursday, 14 May 1992

Dear Friends,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you, *representatives of the United Bible Societies* who are meeting this week at Castelgandolfo. I greet your Secretary General, the Reverend Doctor John Erickson, those of you whom I have met on other occasions and those who are here for the first time. The presence of the Catholic Biblical Federation with its President Bishop Alberto Ablondi, together with representatives of the Italian Biblical Association, speaks of the close links of cooperation which already unite you in your biblical work.

During these days, Christians everywhere are rejoicing in the Lord's triumph over death. Like Saint Matthias, whose feastday it is today, we are called to be "witnesses to his Resurrection" (Acts 1:22) in a world thirsting for that authentic happiness which is the fruit of salvation in Christ Jesus. Our faith in Christ urges us to do all we can to work together in bearing witness to the word of God entrusted by the Spirit to the Church. The fact that full and perfect communion does not yet exist among Christians should be a constant impetus to personal conversion and to fervent prayer that our persistent efforts may be crowned by the gift of unity.

Many and priceless are the spiritual treasures which we share. Among them the Holy Scriptures occupy an eminent place. The Second Vatican Council recalled that the word of God written down in the Sacred Books is a "precious instrument in the mighty hand of God for attaining to that unity which the Saviour holds out to all" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 21). The efforts of the United Bible Societies to spread knowledge of the Scriptures are therefore a significant contribution to the ecumenical cause. This great task and the need for a renewed evangelization of humanity as we

approach the Third Christian Millennium are inseparable aspects of our duty to be faithful and humble messengers of the word of God.

The success you have had in publishing a large number of interconfessional translations constitutes a profound reason for giving thanks to God. Much good will come from your attempts to provide easier access to the Bible, because in the Sacred Books the Heavenly Father meets his children and he speaks to us of his mercy and forgiveness (Cf. *Dei Verbum*, 21). He invites us to turn away from the works of darkness and welcomes us into the Kingdom of light and peace, where we will have life forever.

It is my hope that in the midst of the toil involved in sowing the seed of the word of God today you will experience that joy proclaimed by the Prophet Isaiah: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace, who brings good tidings of good, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns' " (Is. 52:7). In this season of Resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit may you be blessed by the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

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