



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE FAITHFUL FROM THE DIOCESES OF
BRESCIA, VERCELLI AND CHIAVARI (ITALY)**

Saturday, 20 March 1999

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. I affectionately greet you all, faithful from the Dioceses of Brescia, Vercelli and Chiavari, who by your presence here today wish to repay the visit I had the joy of making to your diocesan communities. I also cordially greet you, dear sick people and friends of OFTAL, and the members of the Confraternities present here, who came to Rome to meet the Pope and visit the tomb of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul.

I am pleased to welcome you on the day after the feast of St Joseph. Called to be the guardian of the Redeemer, Joseph "did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife" (Mt 1:24). Inspired by the Gospel, from the earliest centuries the Fathers of the Church stressed that just as he took loving care of Mary and devoted himself to the joyful task of raising Jesus Christ (cf. St Irenaeus, *Adv. Haereses*, IV, 23, 1), so he watches over and protects his Mystical Body, the Church, of which the Blessed Virgin is the figure and model.

May your pilgrimage to Rome, the heart of Christianity, strengthen your faith in Christ and your fidelity to his Gospel.

2. I turn now in a particular way to you, dear faithful from the Diocese of Brescia! I greet each of you with particular kindness. In a special way I greet your new Bishop Giulio Sanguineti, and the Bishop emeritus, Archbishop Bruno Foresti, and your fellow native, Archbishop Giovanni Battista Re. I greet the priests, the religious, the seminarians and I extend my best wishes to the entire diocesan family of Brescia. I was in Brescia twice last year. Know that a special place is reserved in the Pope's heart for you, the fellow citizens of my unforgettable Predecessor, the Servant of God Paul VI; just the other day the closing session of the Diocesan Investigation of his cause took place here in Rome.

As I express my gratitude for your visit, I remember with deep feeling the apostolic pilgrimages that Providence allowed me to make to your city and among the mountains of the Valle Camonica in Borno. Today, I would like to encourage you to continue on your path of constant fidelity to Christ and his message of salvation. Making my own the words of your fellow citizen and Pope, I also say to you: "Be faithful, people of Brescia, promise yourselves and assure the new generation that you will keep your heritage of Christian faith sound, strong, complete and fruitful" (*Speech*, 25 January 1965). May the example of Bl. Giuseppe Tovini be an encouragement to you in this task of consistent and generous witness.

May Blessed Mary, "Our Lady of Grace", assist you; Paul VI loved her and often recalled her with nostalgia. May the late Pope's tender love for Our Lady be an example to you, and may it accompany you every day of your lives.

3. I now greet you, dear brothers and sisters from Chiavari who have come here with your Bishop, Alberto Maria Careggio. Your presence brings back fond memories of my visit to your Diocese last September. As I give thanks to the Lord with you for what he has accomplished in your community, I urge you to continue vigorously on the path of bearing faithful witness to the Gospel.

As I did then, I urge you again to grow in unity and missionary spirit, opening yourselves more and more to the vast horizons of evangelization. I entrust you and the entire diocesan community to Blessed Mary who, under the title of "Our Lady of the Garden", watches over you and your families as your patroness. Always be devoted to her and you will feel her maternal protection in every situation. And Bishop Alberto Careggio, who came from Val d'Aosta, seems to feel more and more Ligurian.

4. I now turn to you, dear faithful from Vercelli, to thank you for your courtesy in wishing to repay my visit to your city last May. I cordially welcome your Archbishop, Enrico Masseroni, as I remember with gratitude his predecessors, Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone, now Secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and the late Archbishop Albino Mensa.

I still remember the warm welcome you gave me during my stay among you and I take this opportunity to greet the priests, the consecrated men and women, and also the representatives of the different groups in your archdiocesan community. Fr Secondo Pollo, whom I had the joy of beatifying during my visit to your city, once again invites all of you to **bet with him on holiness**, which is the vocation of all God's people. He is proof that following Jesus is a demanding task, but also a source of exalting joy.

In expressing my appreciation and gratitude to you for the sentiments which your presence and your enthusiasm demonstrate, I encourage you to persevere in your good intentions so that the seeds that have been sown will bear abundant fruit.

5. Dear sick people and friends of OFTAL, welcome! While I embrace each of you and cordially greet your President, Mons. Franco Degrandi, I fondly recall your late founder, Mons. Alessandro Rastelli, an apostle of suffering, who spent all his life serving the sick. In these years you have continued to follow the road he paved with enthusiasm and devotion, and today you are here to thank the Lord and to renew your intention to continue generously this valuable apostolate. I express to you, sick people, and to all who devote themselves to your care - doctors, nurses, pharmacists, volunteer friends, attendants, priests and religious - my sincere gratitude for the example you give and for the love which you serve in silence and to which you bear eloquent witness. May Blessed Mary, who knows well the redemptive value of human suffering, be at your side in your sufferings and, at times, prolonged illness.

6. I finally greet you, dear faithful members of various Confraternities. I especially greet your President, Mr Nicola Gerardo Marchese, and your spiritual directors. You have come on a pilgrimage to Rome to venerate the image of the Holy Crucifix in the Church of St Marcellus in Via del Corso and to renew, at the tombs of the Apostles and martyrs, your intention to participate in the work of the new evangelization. Missionaries of Christian hope and solidarity, bring the light, joy and grace of Christ wherever you go. Be faithful witnesses of Christ in today's world.

Dear brothers and sisters, I hope that all of you who have come to visit me will generously continue your Lenten journey to Easter. I accompany these wishes with my Apostolic Blessing, which I willingly extend to your families and to the ecclesial communities from which you come.