



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO VARIOUS PILGRIM GROUPS

Saturday, 11 March 2000

*Dear Brothers and Sisters!*¹ I am pleased to receive all of you who have come to celebrate your Jubilee at the beginning of this Lenten season. I first extend a cordial greeting to you, the members of Rotary International. You have crossed the threshold of the Holy Door in the Vatican Basilica and have taken part in the Jubilee Eucharist at which Cardinal Paul Poupard presided; he is here with us and I greet him with affection. Welcome, dear brothers and sisters! I offer each of you my embrace of peace. The celebration of the Jubilee is an excellent occasion for you to meditate on the importance and value of being Christians at the dawn of the third millennium. It would certainly be interesting to ask yourselves what Paul Percy Harris, your founder, would do today and how he would organize the association he founded almost 100 years ago. At the dawn of the 20th century he became aware of the loneliness experienced by people in large cities and sought to remedy it by developing an ever wider network of friendly relations between individuals on the basis of understanding, sympathy and peace among peoples. You have tried to continue this service, dear Rotarians, in an ever more concerned and attentive way in the almost 100 years of your club's existence. The time we are living in is full of potential and challenge. As we cross the threshold of the third millennium of the Christian era, the Church once again presents the ancient and ever new Gospel message to everyone. You Rotarians, who want to be generous heralds and fearless witnesses of Christ, should also dedicate yourselves to giving hope to people today, to overcoming loneliness, indifference, selfishness and evil.² I now greet you, dear faithful who are taking part in the pilgrimage of the Diocese of Pitigliano-Sovana-Orbetello, and especially your Pastor, Bishop Mario Meini, who has led you on this faith journey. Through him, I would like to offer my encouragement and blessing to the priests, religious and faithful of the Diocese. You come from the native land of my predecessor, Pope St Gregory VII. May his example and teachings spur you to love Christ and his Church with renewed intensity. He lived in a historical period when Christians were shaken by serious internal difficulties and the pernicious influence of the worldly spirit. Faced with the mentality of the time, he strove to the very end, even during his sad exile, so that the "Holy Church, Bride of God, our lady and our mother, would once again be adorned with her original splendour as she was for many centuries, and always be free, chaste and catholic" (*PL* 148, 709). He preached and bore witness that holiness is the vocation of every member of the ecclesial community. Times have undoubtedly changed. However, the invitation to all believers to fulfil God's will eagerly and to be steadfast in bearing consistent witness to the faith is still timely. Dear brothers and sisters, the Holy Year not only offers us a special

grace, but also powerful reasons for converting mentalities and lives to a deeper fidelity to Christ and a more intense love for the Church. Returning home, continue in your commitment to Christian witness. Think of yourselves as active members in building the Christian community: "Always be prepared to make a defence to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence" (1 Pt 3: 15). Always have trust: Christ has overcome the world (cf. Jn 16: 33)!³. Next I extend a cordial greeting to the director and members of the Archdiocesan College of Pius XI in Desio. Dear friends, you have wished to make your Jubilee pilgrimage at the beginning of the important season of Lent, in which Christ's call to conversion becomes more insistent. May the Jubilee pilgrimage be a favourable occasion for you to live deeply this year of great spiritual riches. The Holy Door, through which you have passed, signifies God's unlimited kindness to those who want to turn to him and follow the path of holiness. Through this Door and through the Church's ministry, believers are prompted to draw more abundantly from the inexhaustible treasures of divine grace. This is the gift and message for you too: may Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life renew you so that you will be his friends and witnesses in the world. Be faithful to him and spread hope, joy and love among your brothers and sisters.⁴ May these same sentiments also be in your hearts, dear faithful from the parishes of Rieti, Bologna and Urbana. I greet you all affectionately and, in addressing you, I would also like you to take the Pope's best wishes back to your families, friends and brethren in faith. In returning to your homes, may you be able to communicate to everyone you meet the enthusiasm of a renewed faith and the commitment to active charity. May Mary, Mother of the One who began the new time of salvation and whom we call upon with trust, accompany you and always keep you under the mantle of her protection. With these sentiments, I cordially impart a special Blessing to you, which I willingly extend to your families and your communities. © Copyright 2000 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana