



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO THE 31st WING OF THE ITALIAN FORCE FOR THEIR DEDICATED SERVICE

Monday, 28 August 2000

Dear Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers!

*Dear Brothers and Sisters!*¹ I gladly take the opportunity of this annual meeting to express my gratitude to you, dear members of the 31st Wing of the Italian Air Force, who generously and skilfully escort me wherever my pastoral ministry brings me. I greet you with great joy. Your presence reminds me of my many journeys by helicopter, which are possible thanks to your kind availability. I recall one of the most recent, to Tor Vergata, which enabled me to admire from the air the unforgettable sight of the young people taking part in the conclusion of the [15th World Youth Day](#). I am also well aware of the responsibility and generosity which motivate the service that you carry out with a high degree of technical and professional training. I fervently hope that human and Christian values will continue to be the source of inspiration for all your work, and I pray the Lord that you will never lack solidarity and the aspiration to ever more noble objectives. For all this, following a well-established tradition, I am pleased on this occasion to confer special papal honours and awards on some of you. This is a tangible way of expressing my constant gratitude and that of the Holy See for your exemplary and willing cooperation with the apostolic ministry of Peter's Successor. It is also a sign of affectionate appreciation for the whole 31st Wing.² The Christian community, filled with the grace of the Holy Year, is called fervently to live the extraordinary Jubilee gift, in order to help strengthen the new civilization of love. It should keep its gaze fixed on Christ in order to meet him personally, aware that it must commit itself to acts of forgiveness and fraternal love every day. This invitation is for everyone, and I hope that each of you will be able to accept it with conviction in his personal life, in your family and at work. May Our Lady of Loreto, patroness of the Air Force, watch over your difficult work and accompany you in the sky and on the ground; may she look after your intentions and help you continue every day to be impassioned servants of the common good. With these sentiments, as I invoke God's protection on you and on your families, I affectionately give you a special Apostolic Blessing.

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