



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY IN POMPEI

**RECITATION OF THE ROSARY AND
SUPPLICATION OF BL. BARTOLO LONGO**

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II

Tuesday 7 October 2003

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. The Blessed Virgin has granted me to return to honour her at this famous Shrine which Providence inspired Bl. Bartolo Longo to found as a centre of outreach of the Holy Rosary.

In a certain sense, the *Year of the Rosary* culminates in today's visit. I thank the Lord for the fruits of the Year that has given rise to an important reawakening of this prayer, both simple and profound, that goes to the heart of Christian faith; it appears absolutely current as we stand before the challenge of the third millennium and the urgent commitment of the *new evangelization*.

2. The context of Pompei, the ancient Roman city buried under the ashes of Vesuvius in the year 79 A.D., highlights this timeliness in a special way. Those ruins speak. They ask the crucial question about *man's destiny*. They witness to a great culture yet, in addition to enlightened responses, they also disclose disturbing interrogatives. The Marian City was born from the heart of these questions, presenting the risen Christ as the response, the "Gospel" that saves.

Today, as in the times of ancient Pompei, it is vital to *proclaim Christ* to a society that is drifting away from Christian values and even forgetting about them. I thank the Italian Authorities for helping with the organization of my pilgrimage that began in the ancient City. It enabled me to

cross *the ideal bridge of a dialogue, undoubtedly fruitful*, for cultural and spiritual growth. Against the background of ancient Pompei, the proposal of the Rosary acquires symbolic value as a renewed incentive to Christian proclamation in our time.

What actually is the Rosary? *A compendium of the Gospel*. It brings us back again and again to the most important scenes of Christ's life, almost as if to let us "breathe" his mystery. The Rosary is the privileged path to contemplation. It is, so to speak, Mary's way. Is there anyone who knows and loves Christ better than she?

Bl. Bartolo Longo, Apostle of the Rosary, was convinced of this; he paid special attention to the contemplative and Christological character of the Rosary. Thanks to this Blessed, Pompei has become an international centre for the *spirituality of the Rosary*.

3. I wanted my pilgrimage to have the meaning of a *plea for peace*. We have meditated upon the Mysteries of Light as if to turn the beam of Christ's light on the conflicts, tensions and dramas of the five Continents. In my Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, I explained why the Rosary is a prayer that by its very nature is oriented to peace. This is not only because it disposes us to pray for peace, strengthened by the intercession of Mary, but also because it enables us to assimilate Jesus' plan of peace, together with his mystery.

At the same time, with the tranquil rhythm of the repetition of *the Hail Mary* the Rosary calms our spirit and opens it to saving grace. Bl. Bartolo Longo had a prophetic intuition when he chose to add to the church dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary *this facade as a monument to peace*. So it was that the cause of peace came to be part of what the Rosary itself proposes. It is an intuition whose timeliness does not escape us at the beginning of this millennium, already so battered by the winds of war and streaked with blood in so many parts of the world.

4. The invitation to pray the Rosary that rises from Pompei, a crossroads of people of every culture who are attracted both by the Shrine and by the archaeological site, also calls to mind the commitment of Christians, in collaboration with all people of goodwill, to be builders and witnesses of peace. May civil society, represented here by the authorities and personalities whom I cordially greet, welcome this message ever more deeply.

May the ecclesial community of Pompei be ever more equal to facing this challenge. I greet its various members: the priests and deacons, the consecrated persons, especially the Dominican Daughters of the Holy Rosary who were founded precisely for the mission of this Shrine, and the lay people. My heartfelt thanks go to Archbishop Domenico Sorrentino for his warm words to me at the beginning of this meeting. An affectionate "thank you" to you all, devotees of the Queen of the Rosary of Pompei. May you be "peacemakers", following in the footsteps of Bl. Bartolo Longo, who knew how to combine prayer and action, making this Marian City *a stronghold of charity*. The new *Centre for children and families*, which you have kindly desired to name after me,

demonstrates the heritage of this great work.

Dear Brothers and Sisters! May Our Lady of the Holy Rosary bless us as we prepare to call on her with the Supplication. Let us deposit our desires and our good resolutions in her maternal heart.

At the conclusion of the prayer service the Holy Father said:

Thank you, thank you, Pompei. Thank you to all the pilgrims for this warm and most beautiful welcome. Thank you to the Cardinals and to the Bishops present here. Thank you to the Authorities of the Country, of the Region and of the City. Thank you for the enthusiasm of the young people. Thank you, everyone. Pray for me in this Shrine, today and always.