



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER PAUL VI
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE SOVEREIGN MILITARY ORDER OF MALTA****

Monday, 12 July 1976

We warmly greet the Grand Master and Counselors of the Hospitalier Order of St John of Jerusalem, Rhodes and Malta. We are glad to be able to receive you today, at this Audience which you so greatly desired, considering it a prolongation of the liturgical feast of the "Baptist", your heavenly Patron, and particularly dear also to us, who were given his name at baptism.

We are grateful to you for this renewed token of filial love for the humble Successor of Peter, and for your reaffirmed attachment to the Holy See, so nobly expressed. With equal goodwill we extend our thanks to all the knights and their respective families, who are associated, we know, in the respectful tribute.

In the course of our meetings, we have had the opportunity several times to manifest our encouragement for the various forms of beneficial activity which your Institution has now been carrying on for centuries, with zeal sensitive to the seriousness of the problems and the events which bring them about, for the benefit of given necessities of the ecclesial and social Community.

We know that, saying this, we enter the heart of your historic institution, as if to listen to its first heart beat, nay more, to honour that essential character of social charity, which has constituted its beneficial and glorious *raison d'être*. Hence that unfailing and evangelical fruitfulness to comfort human misfortunes and even-recurring social necessities, which has enriched its path with so many useful initiatives and so many concrete testimonies of lavish and watchful charity.

We ourselves had a proof of this, and we are glad to express to you our satisfaction and gratitude for the assiduous service that the Order of Malta offered, with diligent and beneficial work, during the Holy Year – precisely in St Peter's Square, the incomparable meeting-place of the pilgrim peoples – to persons in need of medical aid or health care. It thus associated itself with the celebration of

the jubilee in its own form of silent, solicitous kindness.

Confirming to you our satisfaction, we would like to exhort you to continue in the hospital and welfare work peculiar to your evangelical genius. Certainly there is no lack of many-sided commitment: the social situation, as we all know, has always new needs of beneficial interventions of every kind.

With this wish we invoke from divine Goodness, under the patronage of St John the Baptist, the elect gifts of every spiritual consolation that will be a stimulus to increasingly generous Christian testimony. At the same time we willingly impart to you, and to all the members of the illustrious Order, the special propitiating Blessing, which can be extended to the members of your families and to all persons connected with the Order.

*ORa n.31 p.2.