



The Holy See

**LETTER OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE BISHOP OF ADRIA-ROVIGO
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 17TH INTERNATIONAL
MARIOLOGICAL COLLOQUIUM**

To my Venerable Brother

Bishop Lucio Soravito De Franceschi of Adria-Rovigo

1. I learned with joy that the 17th International Colloquium on Mariology will be taking place in Rovigo from 10 to 12 September 2004, and I send my cordial greeting to all the participants. I greet you in particular, venerable Brother, as well as the members of the Italian Interdisciplinary Mariological Association and the Sisters of Reparation of the Congregation of Mary, who have promoted and organized the Congress on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the coronation of the image of Our Lady of Sorrows which is venerated in Rovigo.

The theme chosen, "*Mary's gaze on the contemporary world*", is as it were an invitation to see with the eyes of the Blessed Virgin the happy and sorrowful events of our time. Mary's eyes are fixed first and foremost on the Most Holy Trinity, on the mystery of ineffable love that indissolubly unites the three divine Persons. Contemplating the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, the Virgin feels as though she were being directed to humanity to carry out for every human being the maternal mission entrusted to her by the crucified Son (cf. Jn 19: 25-27). Mary watches over the world, where her children on their way towards the blessed homeland travel the path of faith, "surrounded by dangers and difficulties" (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 62).

The Blessed Virgin is present as a caring mother "in this ecclesial journey or pilgrimage through space and time, and even more through the history of souls" (*Redemptoris Mater*, n. 25). No situation escapes her motherly gaze, neither in the Church, nor of any individual member of the faithful or of the entire human family.

2. Commemorating the coronation of the image of the Sorrowful Mother, it was natural to reflect in

a special way on the "gaze" that the Virgin on Calvary turned upon the Crucified Christ, who from the Cross invited her to open her motherly heart to his beloved disciple: "*Woman, behold, your son*" (Jn 19: 26). At that moment, after sharing in the passion of the Only-begotten Son, the Mother of God becomes the Mother of John, hence, the Mother of the entire human race (cf. Jn 19: 26-27).

Mary, her heart pierced by the sword of suffering, encourages us to revive our faith in the One who saved us by pouring out his precious blood for all humankind; she points out Jesus to us as the one Saviour, foretold and proclaimed since his birth as "*a light for the Gentiles and glory for your people Israel*" (Lk 2: 32).

We can therefore say that the Sorrowful Virgin is in a certain sense "the cause of salvation for herself and for the entire human race" (St Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, III, 22, 4). Her motherly love spurs us to open our hearts to the suffering of others, and especially to all those in search of valid answers to their deep questions about life.

3. Venerable Brother, I accompany with prayer the work of this interesting Colloquium that has brought together eminent scholars of Mariology and so many devotees of Mary. May the Holy Virgin help each one to understand how to witness in daily life to his or her own faith in Christ and what the means are to work effectively to spread the Gospel, ever docile to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit and ready to do the Lord's will.

With these sentiments I cordially impart to you, dear Brother in Christ, to the organizers, the relators, the Sisters of Reparation of the Congregation of Mary and all those attending the International Mariological Colloquium a special Apostolic Blessing.

From Castel Gandolfo, 8 September 2004, Feast of the Nativity of Mary

JOHN PAUL II