



The Holy See

RECITAL OF THE ROSARY

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II

Saturday, 7 February 1998

1. *"And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house"* (Acts 16:32). Dear families of Rome, this verse from the Acts of the Apostles frames our meeting of faith and prayer which ends the diocesan week dedicated to life and the family as part of the *City Mission*. I greet the Cardinal Vicar, Camillo Ruini, whom I thank for his kind words. With him, I greet Bishop Francisco Gil Hellín, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Family, the Honourable Carlo Casini, national president of the Pro-Life Movement, Mons. Luigi Moretti, diocesan director of the Pastoral Centre for the Family, and Mons. Renzo Bonetti, national director of the Italian Episcopal Conference's Office for Family Ministry. At this time I am thinking of all the families in the Diocese, especially those who feel particularly troubled: may the constant attention of the Pope and of all the local Church be an encouragement to them. I would like to repeat to everyone the words spoken by St Paul and his fellow prisoner, Silas, after their miraculous release, to the astounded jailer who asked them what he should do to be saved. The Apostle replied: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:31). Welcome Christ's presence into your family: this is the invitation that rings out this evening. Dear families of Rome, do not be afraid to open the doors of your home to Jesus Christ. His divine plan enriches families, frees them from all slavery and leads them to the total fulfilment of their own vocation.

2. At the many meetings I have been able to have with young people in Italy and throughout the world, I see evidence of a growing desire to build families in which the genuine values of love, respect for life, openness to others and solidarity can be lived. How can we fail to notice in these aspirations an implicit opposition to the permissive behaviour contemporary society is seeking to endorse? Dear Christian families, look at the need for love, self-giving and openness to life that exists in the hearts of your children, who are confused by examples of failed unions. Children learn how to love their future husband or wife by seeing their parents' example. Do not be satisfied with living the Gospel of the family in private, but proclaim it and witness to it to everyone you meet on your way and in every area of public and social life. In this bold yet connatural task of bearing witness you are not alone. The Holy Spirit is with you: he dwells within you by virtue of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Marriage! He will sustain you in the fulfilment of your mission!

3. Our city of Rome, like all Italy, has great need of a new, systematic policy for the family, in order to face with the hope of success the very serious challenges that lie before us, the first of which is the fall in the birth rate. It is an illusion to think that wellbeing can be created by a selfish mentality which in various ways denies space and acceptance to new generations. The attempt to equate other forms of cohabitation with the family based on marriage proves just as irrational. All this inevitably leads to a civilization's decline, both morally and spiritually, as well as socially and economically. Therefore I ask you, the families of

Rome and all the families of Italy, to join forces, also through the activity of the *Family Forum*, to promote the identity of the family as a social subject and thus to achieve those cultural and legislative changes which can do justice to families and ensure the true welfare of society. The Church is at your side in this task and will never desert you.⁴ Dear families of Rome, as we contemplate the model of the Holy Family of Nazareth, let us pray the Rosary together. Let us entrust to the intercession of Mary and her husband, Joseph, all the families in our city and especially those who are living in difficult situations. Let us entrust to them the young people preparing for marriage through that moment of grace which is their engagement. Let us also entrust to them those responsible for promoting more just and constructive family policies. May the Lord bless all families and make them privileged places for meeting him, through the authentic proclamation of his love. May Mary, Queen of the Family, protect you all with her maternal heart and, through her intercession, obtain for you from God an abundance of consolations. © Copyright 1998 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

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