



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER  
POPE JOHN PAUL II  
TO CATHOLIC JOURNALISTS OF BELGIUM**

*Friday, 23 October 1998*

*Mr President,  
Dear Friends,*

You have wished, as you do every year, to meet the Successor of Peter to offer him the *Étrennes pontificales* collection, organized by the *Associations of Catholic Editors and Journalists of Belgium*. Touched by your good wishes for the anniversary of my Pontificate, I am pleased to greet you on this occasion and to warmly thank you and your generous donors for this act, which shows the attachment to the Holy See and to the Church's mission of the journalists and readers of the Catholic press in Belgium. Despite the difficulties your country is undergoing, your compatriots have agreed to give part of their wealth for the benefit of the universal Church and her charitable work. I am particularly touched by this initiative, a sign of communion that Christian communities make by entrusting to the Pope the careful redistribution of gifts from the various local Churches.

In the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah (58:6-9) recalls that whoever wants to be close to God and to be a light as bright as the dawn, must take care of the poor and “share his bread with the hungry” as a sign of his love for God and his brethren. It is in this spirit that you wish to contribute your offering and that of your readership to the Successor of Peter. May the generous donors discover that “losing something for God means finding it many times over” (Origin, *Homily on Genesis*, 7, 6)!

Your gesture also recalls that we are supportive of our brothers and sisters in humanity, and that it is our task to open our hearts to the distressed, near and far. This is one of the essential aspects of the Church's continuing tradition (cf. Encyclical *Centesimus annus*, n. 57), because love of the

poor is a tangible witness to the loving presence of Christ among men. We also take part in building the earthly city, in which each must be able to enjoy his share of the riches of creation. It is also right to further the social advancement of peoples with an appropriate education and formation in all areas, so that they can take charge of their personal and common future and thus have a proper place in the concert of nations. It is everyone's duty to encourage projects that will enable the people of each country to be more responsible for their future and that of their family, so that they can feed themselves through a rational and equitable management of the resources produced by their land.

At the end of our meeting, I would like to renew my appeal that, during the Great Jubilee, Christians and people of goodwill will have an ever more acute sense of justice in sharing riches between persons and peoples.

As I entrust you to the intercession of Our Lady of the Rosary and of St Francis de Sales, I cordially grant you my Apostolic Blessing, which I extend to the members of your associations, to your readership and to your families.

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