



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
TO THE ITALIAN PILGRIMS
FROM THE DIOCESE OF ASCOLI PICENO AND MEMBERS
OF THE PONTIFICAL ACADEMY OF ST THOMAS AQUINAS**

Saturday, 24 June 2000

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

1. You have come in large numbers to make your Jubilee pilgrimage to this beloved city of Rome. I extend my cordial greetings to you all. In particular, my thoughts turn to the faithful from the Diocese of Ascoli Piceno, who want this pilgrimage to strengthen their close bond of communion with the Successor of Peter. Dear friends, welcome!

I first extend my cordial greeting to your Pastor, Bishop Silvano Montevicchi, and thank him for his kind words on behalf of you all. Through him, I would like to assure the entire Diocese of a remembrance in my prayer: the beloved priests, consecrated men and women, lay faithful and especially those who are actively involved in the life of your Church, the young people, the sick and those who seek the truth with a sincere heart. Fr Raniero Cantalamessa, who hails from your region and is the Preacher of the Papal Household, is also here with you today and I greet him affectionately. Lastly, I extend my respectful greetings to the civil authorities of every rank and level who have wished to attend this significant gathering.

By providential design, today's visit to the Jubilee sites is taking place within the framework of the International Eucharistic Congress, whose solemn conclusion will be celebrated tomorrow. May this coincidence strengthen you all in faith and devotion to the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, which the Church keeps as a precious treasure given to sustain her on her journey to the eternal Easter.

2. I am aware of the pastoral initiative that since October has involved all the parishes of your

Diocese in an in-depth reflection on the Eucharist and Holy Mass. During this period, under the guidance of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers, Eucharistic Weeks have been held on the theme: "Christ, Life of the Soul, Lord of History".

I was delighted to learn of the notable fruits produced at the catechetical and pastoral level in the many Word of God "Listening Centres" set up in families. As many people wish, this experience should be extended for the benefit of those who want to continue growing in their knowledge of the faith. Various ecclesial associations have collaborated on this initiative, which has involved many people in a journey of reflection. This aspect should also be also be developed.

Catechetical work finds its fulfilment in the liturgical celebration, for the paschal event that it proclaims is fully realized in the mystery lived through the sacramental gifts. The Eucharistic Weeks organized in the parishes and vicariates of your Diocese have helped you prepare yourselves intensely to live the Eucharistic dimension of ecclesial life in the concrete situations you encounter each day. Now that the seed has been scattered, the soil must be cultivated so that the liturgy of the Cross, the liturgy of Light, the liturgy of Charity will be better and better known and lived.

Rediscovery of the pious practice of Eucharistic adoration, using the materials prepared by the Benedictine nuns of the monastery of Offida, has introduced you to the prayerful dimension of ecclesial life. In fact, a constant and profound dialogue with Christ, present in a most special way in the Eucharist, strengthens the task of witness and mission, entrusted to every baptized person, according to his state of life.

3. The ecclesial community thus becomes a "meeting tent" in order to open itself then to sharing with everyone: young people, workers, the elderly, prisoners, the sick, the poor, married or engaged couples and consecrated persons.

The time devoted to evangelization and celebration must be followed by a substantial commitment to charity through concrete acts of solidarity. I know that your Diocese has already planned to build a youth ministry centre in Sierra Leone and a home for disabled children in Zambia. New structures have also been opened in your region to aid people with material or spiritual problems. Fearlessly continue to serve the poor who knock at the doors of your heart. It is Christ who comes to visit you in them, in order to give you his grace. A revitalized faith, firmer hope and tireless charity will be the most valuable fruits of your Holy Year celebration.

4. I would now like to extend an affectionate greeting to the members of the Pious Sodality of Piceno, an ancient and praiseworthy Roman confraternity that for four centuries has been working to preserve and spread human and Christian values among the large and active community of people from the Marches in this city. My cordial thoughts also turn to the pilgrims from Holy Spirit Parish in Palo del Colle and Our Lady of the Assumption Parish in Civita, from the Eparchy of

Lungro and also to the participants in the relay race organized by the recreational club for railway workers in Udine, to the employees of the Cassa di Risparmio of Ferrara, to the Italian Association of Barmen and Supporters, and to the Frate Indovino Publishers of Perugia. Lastly, I greet the members of the Pontifical Academy of St Thomas, who have gathered in Rome these days for their first assembly.

Dear friends, may the Jubilee be an occasion for you to renew your fidelity to Christ and his Gospel, so that your Christian witness may have an ever greater impact on society. May you be supported on this journey by the intercession of the Mother of God and of the Forerunner of Christ, who is especially honoured in today's liturgy.

I accompany these wishes with my Apostolic Blessing, which I gladly impart to you present here and to your families and loved ones, with special affection for the sick, the elderly and all who, despite their wishes, were unable to be with us here at today's meeting.

Praised be Jesus Christ!

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