



The Holy See

**LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE BISHOP OF SAVONA-NOLI
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 200th ANNIVERSARY
OF THE CROWNING OF OUR LADY OF MERCY**

[Multimedia]

*My Venerable Brother
Vittorio Lupi
Bishop of Savona-Noli*

I wish to join in the devotion of the People of God in the Diocese of Savona-Noli in paying homage to Our Lady of Mercy, invoking in a special way her motherly protection for the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy which I recently proclaimed.

Placing myself in the footsteps of my Predecessor Benedict XVI, I spiritually come to the Shrine erected just under 500 years ago, in the place where the Virgin appeared to the peasant Antonio Botta. She called for repentance and conversion and, at the end, bid farewell with the words: "Mercy not justice"; an exhortation more relevant than ever for our time which, in a special way, is a time of mercy.

The people of Savona's unanimous response to the appeal of Our Lady drew a true "cascade" of grace from Heaven, and also gave rise to many charitable and social initiatives, demonstrating that spiritual mercy and corporeal mercy are inseparable.

In such a dramatic moment in the history of Europe, Pope Pius VII, kidnapped by Napoleon and imprisoned in Savona, obtained permission to go to the Shrine of Our Lady of Mercy and he vowed that, once freed, he would return there to crown her; this took place on 10 May 1815, and on 24 May he instituted the Feast of Mary Most Holy, "Help of Christians". Indeed, the Mother of Mercy is always nearby and helps all her children when they find themselves in danger, or, as is often the case in our times, they suffer discrimination and persecution.

Therefore my hope is that throughout the Church — as we approach the Extraordinary Holy Year — there be a deepening and a spreading of trust in the Mother of Mercy, who in that land gave an everlasting sign of her tenderness and of her closeness to the pilgrim People of God in the world.

To you, Venerable Brother, and to the beloved diocesan community of Savona-Noli, I assure my special remembrance and, as I ask you to pray for me and for my ministry, I send the Apostolic Blessing from my heart.

From the Vatican, 10 May 2015

FRANCIS