



## The Holy See

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***LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL I  
TO MONSIGNOR HUGO AUFDERBECK  
ON THE SEVENTH CENTENARY OF  
THE CHURCH OF SAINT SEVERUS***

*To Our Beloved Brother Hugh Aufderbeck  
Titular Bishop of Arca di Fenicia  
Apostolic Administrator of Erfurt-Meiningen*

We turn our mind to the church of Saint Severus, the glory of Erfurt because it is outstanding for its antiquity, its works of art, but especially for its religious influence. Tradition has it that in former times a small sanctuary existed there dedicated to Saint Blaise. Later it was called after Saint Paul and became the "house of prayer" for a convent of nuns. After this, the records show that in the ninth century the relics of Saint Severus, Bishop of Ravenna, were brought to Mainz and from there to Erfurt and were placed with honour in this church with the consequent increase of devotion to this Saint. The church then began to be named after Saint Severus.

Then a new church was built in his honour, a notable example of Gothic style. The priests' choir, as it is called, was opened for divine worship in the year 1278. The remaining section which is divided into five parts was completed later. Also in the fourteenth century a stone sarcophagus was skilfully made to contain the bones of Saint Severus and Saint Innocent.

Indeed, with the building of this church the devotion of the faithful became more fervent. Especially on the twenty-second of October very many people were accustomed to frequent this church, after the manner of pilgrims, to venerate with great devotion Saint Severus who was considered to be the patron of weavers, and to implore his intercession. It is also recorded that for several centuries there was attached to this church a monastery of the Canons Regular who devoted themselves to the praise of God and the spiritual needs of the faithful.

We have been informed that on the twenty-second of October next, solemn ceremonies will take

place to commemorate the seventh centenary of the founding of this church, which has now been restored with great care.

These stones, therefore, speak of the faith and the devotion of our forefathers and they urge the faithful who are there now to preserve intact such sacred heritage and to make it effective in their lives. Furthermore, let those who frequent this holy place strive to be themselves "spiritual houses" (cf. 1 Pet 2:5) in which God dwells by his grace, so that these words of Saint Augustine can be applied to them: "God... dwells in each one as in his temples, and in all gathered together, as in his temple" (*Ep. 187:13, 38; PL 33:84, 7*).

Finally this church instils into one's mind the desire for that heavenly home, where one may enjoy for all eternity the gifts, which the eye cannot see, about which the ear cannot hear, nor can they be adequately represented by any thought; indeed, "the building we have from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor 5:1). This certainly gives true meaning and real importance to this short and often arduous life on earth. In times of adversity, let us long for that blessed life which will never fail, and let us not forget it in times of prosperity.

While we desire very much and pray fervently to God that this holy celebration will redound to the benefit and the increase of religion, we willingly impart to you, Beloved Brother, to your Auxiliary Bishop, to the clergy, religious, and faithful, entrusted to your pastoral care, the Apostolic Blessing, as a token of heavenly favours and a proof of our affection.

From the Vatican, on the twenty-eighth day of September, in the Year 1978, the first of our Pontificate.

**IOANNES PAULUS PP. I**