



The Holy See

***LETTER OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
ON THE 600th ANNIVERSARY OF THE
BIRTH OF BLESSED ANDREW OF MONTEREALE***

*To my Venerable Brother
Archbishop Mario Peressin
of L'Aquila, Italy*

1. This Archdiocese, together with the Order of St Augustine, is preparing solemnly to celebrate the 600th anniversary of the birth of Bl. Andrew of Montereale, a native of Mascioni (L'Aquila), who as an adolescent joined the Augustinians with the desire to open his heart more fully to the mysterious presence of God.

Despite the passing of the centuries, the memory of this venerable religious has remained alive and many continue to invoke him as an efficacious intercessor with God. His witness is a concrete invitation to a life of authentic faith, of profound contemplation and of faithful compliance with the will of God.

2. Even during his time on earth, Bl. Andrew's fame of holiness was acknowledged: he was revered by the people because of his deep spirituality and his penitent life. Today as well, in an era of rapid changes that often risk sweeping away the genuine values of the person and his authentic interior life, the example of Bl. Andrew can be held up as particularly pertinent and meaningful. In fact, when man fails to cultivate the inward dimension of his existence, he loses his true personal identity. Asceticism and an unceasing yearning for communion with God teach the believer not to let himself be seduced by the fleeting appearances of the world and help him to free himself from every deceptive myth.

These were the convictions that guided the still very young shepherd boy, Andrew, towards his choice of the consecrated life, in the footsteps of Christ who invites his disciples to take up their cross and follow him, leaving everything. He thus devoted himself to study and prayer, cultivating

a constant relationship with the Lord, who sometimes manifested himself to him with extraordinary signs. Ordained a priest after having completed his studies in Rimini, Padua and Ferrara, he became an expert in philosophy and law and a teacher of theology. He was later entrusted with other responsibilities, being much appreciated and esteemed both by the Augustinian community and the faithful.

Impelled by his love for Christ (cf. 2 Cor 5:14) and in a true spirit of service inherited from St Augustine, Bl. Andrew devoted himself passionately and fruitfully to preaching to the people in various cities of Italy and France. His words drew strength not only from his study of the Sacred Scriptures, but also from contemplative prayer and the constant practice of penance.

3. In invoking the intercession of Bl. Andrew on all those who entrust themselves to his protection, I would like to invite everyone to find in this commemoration a fitting occasion to renew their faith in the Lord, who enriches the Church with so many examples of holiness. May his example and intercession help the faithful of this ancient Church and the whole Augustinian family to serve Christ with generous and faithful devotion, as he tried to do in every circumstance of his life.

With these wishes, I warmly impart a special Apostolic Blessing to you, to the venerable Coadjutor Archbishop and to the whole Archdiocese of L'Aquila, as well as to the Augustinian Order and the citizens of Montereale.

From Castel Gandolfo, 11 August 1997.

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