



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
FOR THE OPENING
OF THE BROTHERHOOD CAMPAIGN 2001 IN BRAZIL**

Dear Brothers and Sisters of Brazil,

It gives me great pleasure to open the first Brotherhood Campaign of the new millennium, sponsored by the National Bishops' Conference of Brazil during Lent of this year, with the theme: "Life Yes, Drugs No!".

We still have a vivid memory of the Jubilee year just ended; may the merciful Lord grant it to be an abundant source of grace and consolation for all Christians, since he sent his Son to earth so that "all may have life, and have it abundantly" (cf. Jn 10: 10). Yes, dear brothers and sisters! May all have the true life obtained through the merciful love of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Lent is meant to be a call to conversion of heart through prayer and penance, in the hope that as we "fight the spirit of evil we will be strengthened with the help of self-denial", as we say in the Opening Prayer on Ash Wednesday. Today the Church in Brazil wants to help all society to be involved in preventing drug abuse. I hope that living and bearing witness to this Christian spirit of self-control will open the way to a new life of union with Christ.

These are my wishes, especially for those who have become ensnared by drugs. Many of those who unfortunately fell into the clutches of narcotics testify that this experience was an escape from themselves and from reality. Drug abuse is often the result of inner emptiness, resignation and the loss of a sense of direction, which at times lead to despair. This is why drugs are not overcome with drugs, but require far-reaching preventive efforts so that the culture of death is replaced by the culture of life.

Young people and families must be given concrete reasons for hope and effective help with their daily problems. A real alternative to the various poisonous substances that anaesthetize the human person has been found by many people in a community which, in addition to clinical solutions, has offered them a human and spiritual way out from the abyss of drugs, and enabled

them to return to life, so that they can take the lead in helping to build a society free from drugs of every kind. The Church is grateful to all who offer this skilled and disinterested service to human life and dignity.

If faith is expressed in all of life, it will be the example of a simple and sober life by which the men and women of Brazil will bear witness that Christ is in our midst. Be messengers of hope for the victims of this social scourge, especially among young people. It is when the Brazilian family is threatened by these evils that hope in the risen Christ gives us the certainty of liberation and salvation.

I ask God, through the intercession of *Our Lady of the Apparition*, to protect Brazil and its people, as I impart my Apostolic Blessing to you as a pledge of my sincere affection for the Land of the Holy Cross.

From the Vatican, 6 January 2001.