



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS  
OF POPE JOHN PAUL II  
AT A READING OF DANTE'S DIVINE COMEDY**

*Sunday, 31 August 1997*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

1. I am pleased to extend a cordial welcome to each of you who have gathered in this courtyard of the Apostolic Palace in Castel Gandolfo to pay homage to the art and faith of the greatest Italian poet.

In particular I greet Cardinal Ersilio Tonini and Archbishop Luigi Amaducci of Ravenna. I also greet the Deputy Prime Minister, the President of the Dante Alighieri Association and all who have wanted to participate in this particular moment of the "Dante Project", which, thanks to the rigorous and original reading of Prof. Vittorio Sermoni, has allowed us to hear again the marvellous stages of Dante's spiritual and artistic journey.

With the reading of the last canto of the "Paradiso", we too have been invited this evening to become pilgrims of the spirit and to be led by Dante's sublime poetry to contemplate "the Love that moves the sun and the other stars", the ultimate end of history and of every human life. In these verses the divine Poet points to the definitive goal of existence, where the passions subside and where man discovers his end-point and his extraordinary vocation as one called to contemplate the divine Mystery.

2. In the grand scene presenting man's search for salvation, the Poet assigns a central place to Mary, "humble and higher than creation", the familiar and sublime image of the woman who sheds light on the parable of the final ascent, after having supported the traveler's tiring journey. What a consoling vision!

Almost seven centuries later, Dante's art evokes lofty emotions and the greatest convictions, and still proves capable of instilling courage and hope, guiding contemporary man's difficult existential

quest for the Truth which knows no setting.

I would like to thank the organizers of the "Dante Project", particularly Prof. Vittorio Sermonti, for this moment of spirituality and aesthetic pleasure which they wanted to offer me. I express my deep satisfaction with the praiseworthy efforts they have made for several years in Ravenna's Church of St Francis. I also offer my best wishes that their commitment to introducing people of every age to the artistic witness of Dante Alighieri may be crowned with success and stir up renewed interest in the perennial values which motivated the divine Poet's human and religious life.

Invoking the protection of our Virgin Mother, I gladly impart to those present my Apostolic Blessing.

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