



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
ON A VISIT TO ST MARY MAJOR**

Monday, 8 December 1997

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. After paying my customary tribute to the Blessed Virgin in Piazza di Spagna, my short Marian pilgrimage for 8 December now brings me to this very ancient basilica dedicated to the Mother of God, to pause in prayer before the icon of the *Salus Populi Romani*, so venerated by citizens and pilgrims.

Hail, full of grace, Salvation of the Roman People! I come to you as Bishop of Rome and as one devoted to you. I come as Pastor of the universal Church, who recognizes you as his own Mother and model.

In coming today to St Mary Major's, I have the happy opportunity to extend a cordial greeting to all who serve the pastoral and administrative needs of the basilica, to the Liberian Chapter, to the faithful present and to the pilgrims who flock here in vast numbers from every part of the world. May Mary help and comfort them all with her maternal protection.

2. I am also very pleased to open the second preparatory year for the *Great Jubilee* of the Year 2000, the year dedicated to the Holy Spirit, with my visit to the Blessed Virgin, sanctuary of the Spirit. To Mary I entrust the Church's journey to the holy door of the third millennium. May she, Spouse of the Holy Spirit and his perfect co-operator, teach today's Christian community how to let themselves be guided and pervaded by the divine Spirit, so that the bonds of charity and communion may be strengthened in them, and the message of Christ, Saviour of the world, may be credible to all.

I pray especially for the *Special Assembly for America of the Synod of Bishops*, which will be concluding shortly. May the Blessed Virgin, venerated in so many shrines on that continent, obtain the gift of authentic renewal for the Christian communities of America.

I now address the *Salus Populi Romani*, asking her to watch over Rome's *City Mission*, which is now under way. May Mary's intercession support the commitment of the Cardinal Vicar, the Auxiliary Bishops, the parish priests and curates and all the priests, religious and missionaries.

3. From this Marian heart of Rome, *I pray for everyone who lives in our city.*

I pray for everyone, according to the particular intention suggested by this place and by the liturgical season of Advent, as I invoke *the gift of hope* for every man and woman, for every family and circumstance of life. How numerous are this city's expectations! May the Lord grant that they not be disappointed, thereby causing discouragement and resignation. May the Holy Spirit enkindle in everyone the virtue of hope, to build together the Rome of the Year 2000, a city that will be a sign of hope for the whole world.

Immaculate Virgin, *Salus Populi Romani*, pray for us!

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