



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE ALSATIAN GYPSIES**

Friday, 21 March 1997

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,
"Itinerant People" from Alsace,*

1. I am pleased to receive you during the pilgrimage you are making to the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul. I greet you most cordially together with Archbishop Charles Amarin Brand of Strasbourg and the representatives of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, who have accompanied you.

We are on the eve of the great week of the Lord's Passion. His death on the Cross is the clearest expression of God's love for us. Jesus' sacrifice for all humanity confers on each individual the dignity of a person loved by God. All human beings must be respected, loved and served, because they are brothers or sisters of Christ. When this relationship with the Saviour is ignored, the way is open to humiliation or contempt, which one tries to legitimize by unjust discrimination.

2. I know your attachment to the faith, the Catholic Church and the Pope. Constantly renew your life as believers by drawing on the sources of God's word and by remaining faithful to community and personal prayer. As I said when I received those attending a meeting for the [pastoral care of Gypsies](#) on 8 June 1995: "A new evangelization is necessary, addressed to each member as well as to a beloved portion of the pilgrim People of God" (*L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 28 June 1995, p. 5); this initiative will help you overcome the temptations that are strong today: to withdraw into yourselves, to seek refuge in sects or to squander your religious heritage and turn to a materialism that makes it impossible to recognize God's presence.

3. Your visit gives me the opportunity to recall that on 4 May I will have the joy of beatifying in

Rome Ceferino Jiménez Malla, a Gypsy admirable for the seriousness and wisdom of his human and Christian life. He lived life to the full, for he led a holy life in fidelity to God and in the manner proper to Gypsies. He died a martyr of the faith, clasping to his breast the rosary he recited every day with tender, filial devotion to Mary. He is a beautiful example of fidelity to the faith for all Christians, and especially for you who are close to him because of your ethnic and cultural ties.

In the footsteps of Ceferino Jiménez Malla, there are certainly persons among you who can organize pastoral activity in your Christian community of itinerant people. In the local Church, the ordinations of men from your people to the diaconate and to other ministries are positive facts and must continue.

4. This meeting enables me to offer you my best wishes for the holy celebrations of Easter, when we will celebrate the central event of salvation history, the foundation of Christian hope. Through Baptism, the sacrament of spiritual rebirth, you share in Jesus' Death and Resurrection; you are given a new life. Easter is the time for renewing our baptismal promises: do it with conviction and trust in the love of our Lord. It is he who will give you strength and courage in the difficulties you encounter on your way.

As I invoke the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints who are dear to you, I impart my Apostolic Blessing to those of you present here, to your families and to your communities.

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