



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO ITALIAN SURGICAL SOCIETY**

Thursday, 15 October 1998

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I offer my cordial welcome to all of you who are taking part in the 100th Congress of the prestigious Italian Surgical Society. Thank you for your visit! Your presence is particularly significant to me, not only because of your distinguished professional activity, but also because of your desire to inspire your daily work with fundamental ethical values.

I cordially greet your President, Prof. Giorgio Ribotta, and thank him for his courteous words on behalf of you all. With him, I greet the directors of the Surgical Societies of the European Community countries, as well as those of the other sister-societies and the presidents of the surgical societies established as an extension of general surgery.

2. During your meeting you have examined the complex tasks of surgery. You have also analyzed the new horizons created by the extraordinary progress made in the considerable increase of therapeutic possibilities, for example, in the removal and reconstruction of organs or in the vast area of transplants.

Your main concern is to improve the patient's health, while respecting his physical, psychological and spiritual integrity. In showing deep satisfaction with this noble intention, I hope that it will be the constant concern of every doctor and surgeon. The humanization of medicine is not a secondary aspect, but rather it is the centre of a practical medical science that is prepared not to turn a deaf ear to the human being's expectations nor to disappoint them.

In your profession, you seek to be in the forefront of defending life, whose deficiencies and

limitations due to disease you encounter, but without giving up your fight to overcome them or at least to reduce their most painful consequences. The Church is beside you as you fulfil this indispensable calling, since “the Church today lives a fundamental aspect of her mission in lovingly and generously accepting every human being, especially those who are weak and sick. This is made all the more necessary as a ‘culture of death’ threatens to take control” (*Christifidelis laici*, n. 38).

In recent years, I too, on more than one occasion, have experienced and shared the condition of patients, either by visiting them or by being obliged myself to be admitted to hospital. Thus I have been able to experience your professional expertise, always accompanied by attentive humanity. Today I am pleased to express my appreciation and thanks to you for all you do for those who are suffering. At this moment, I should like to express special gratitude to the late Prof. Francesco Crucitti, who embodied these most lofty qualities in a generous and exemplary way.

3. Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I offer you my best wishes that the work of your congress will help open the field of surgery to ever more promising horizons in the areas of prevention, diagnostics, therapy and rehabilitation. Your activity as surgeons is an incomparable gift to society.

May God always help you remain faithful to the spirit of your profession and to serve lovingly those who are experiencing the trial of sickness and suffering. May he give you the strength always to practise it with great enthusiasm in a spirit of service.

Be teachers for the young surgeons, not only from a professional but also from a human standpoint, so that taught by you they will be able to care for health and life, giving priority to the ethical dimension which alone can fully guarantee that the person is authentically served.

I entrust the results of your congress to Mary, Health of the sick, and I assure you of my remembrance in prayer to the Lord, Physician and Saviour of souls and bodies, so that he may sustain you in your activity.

With these sentiments, I implore upon you, your families and your collaborators an abundance of heavenly favours, as a pledge of which I willingly impart my Apostolic Blessing to you all.

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