



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO PILGRIMS FROM BELLUNO-FELTRE**

Monday, 28 September 1998

Venerable Brother in the Episcopate,

Dear Priests and Religious,

Dear Faithful,

1. You are gathered here from a land that for centuries has been joined by bonds of faith to the Successor of Peter, and in recent years has further enriched this relationship with notes of friendship and familiarity: was not your Diocese the birthplace of my venerable Predecessor, the unforgettable Pope John Paul I? I too, then, was able to spend restful days in a house situated in the enchanting territory of the Diocese, in contact with the beauty of those places and the cordial hospitality of the people.

I already had occasion to greet you and thank you last summer when, in Lorenzago di Cadore, I met a significant representation of your Diocese, led by your Bishop, Pietro Brollo, who is also with you today. To him I extend my fraternal greetings and my sincere gratitude for the warm words expressing your sentiments.

2. Today, as I welcome you with affection, my thoughts turn immediately to the wonderful scenery of your mountains and valleys, but also to the history of the men and women who have lived and continue to live their human and Christian lives there: a history that must be increasingly open to the action of God's Spirit, because we cannot be fascinated by the beauty of creation without also being committed to the transformation of our hearts and minds.

In his wise and harmonious plan, God placed you in that environment, so that you could become its careful guardians and diligent stewards (cf. Gn 2:8). There, in your daily lives, God calls you to communion with his Son Jesus. He calls you to make the Church of Christ a reality: "a city set on a hill" (Mt 5:14). This plan of life is constantly guided by the strength and sweetness of his Spirit, so that your community may be a sign and a concrete opportunity for dialogue, for leadership and for renewal of the surrounding human environment.

3. The Church of God in Belluno-Feltre is sent to fulfil her mission according to the various charisms and ministries instilled in her by the Holy Spirit. Thus, the work of the Bishop and priests, who in their person sacramentally represent Christ the head and teacher, will be primarily dedicated to the pastoral care of the Christian community. The commitment of the deacons and of the other ordained ministers will be a permanent sign of Christ who “came not to be served but to serve” (Mk 10:45). The presence of men and women religious will be a constant invitation to lift our eyes “beyond the ring of the mountains”, beyond the earthly horizon, in dynamic expectation of the future and definitive reality.

In view, then, of the world's transformation, the role of the laity with their gifts and their tasks can be seen in a specific way. In today's world, “in this great moment in history” (*Christifideles laici*, n. 3), to you, dear sensitive and generous lay people, I repeat the call that echoes the Gospel parable: “It is not permissible for anyone to remain idle” (*ibid.*). In a society so tragically marked by indifference to God and contempt for the human person and his dignity, yet so needful of God and so anxious for justice and peace (cf. *ibid.* nn. 4-6), “it is not permissible for anyone to remain idle”!

You lay people, the “*christifideles laici*”, heirs to a great history of faith which preceded you and was given to you as the most precious of gifts, your first duty is the vocation to personal holiness. This will be achieved precisely in the situations in which you are called to live, that is, in the realities of the world (cf. *ibid.*, n. 17): the family and educational processes, the school and its programmes, openness to social involvement in the various forms of volunteer service, political activity, work and the economy, culture and communications, leisure time and tourism (cf. *ibid.*, n. 40- 44), that is, the various areas in which you live your life.

This vocation to holiness will require, as its essential human aspect, a journey of doctrinal, catechetical and cultural formation (*ibid.*, nn. 60), so that your participation in the history of your surrounding may be more and more powerfully marked by Christianity. It is here that the constructive activity of the parishes and the various Christian associations find their most noble goal: their purpose in fact is to prepare mature Christians within society like the leaven in the dough. Here you can find the full meaning of the readiness shown by many lay people, in the context of the diocesan mission for the Jubilee, to proclaim Christ the Redeemer, so that the doors of homes and hearts will be opened to salvation.

4. How can we not think, in this context, of a witness who left an indelible mark on history? As you have already understood, I am referring to Pope John Paul I, who exactly 20 years ago today closed his eyes to the world to open them to the light of eternity. His memory is still very vivid in our hearts. I remember wishing in the first year of my Pontificate to pay homage to him by visiting Canale d'Agordo, his birthplace. Later, in 1988, the 10th anniversary of his death, I visited the “Centre of Spirituality and Culture” named after him.

And now, on the 20th anniversary of his death, you have wished to make your pilgrimage to the See of Peter in memory of John Paul I, to begin in prayer and recollection the great mission that I mentioned earlier. May the example and teaching of one who took “God's smile” from your land and gave it to mankind, encourage your “work of faith”, your “labour of love”, your “steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ” (cf. 1 Thes 1:3).

With this wish, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to you all.

