



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO THE PILGRIMS FROM CREMONA

Saturday, 4 March 2000

1. I joyfully greet the members of the pilgrimage from Cremona. Dear brothers and sisters, you have come to celebrate the Jubilee in Rome. I am particularly pleased to welcome you and to express my pleasure at this visit, which is a significant moment in the Jubilee journey you are making as modern "romei" to the places where the Apostles Peter and Paul were martyred. I extend a fraternal greeting to your Pastor, Bishop Giulio Nicolini. I also greet the priests, the deacons, the consecrated persons, the men and women religious, the members of secular institutes, the seminarians and all the lay faithful, with a special thought for everyone involved in pastoral organizations and the tasks of the new evangelization. Lastly, I respectfully and cordially greet the Mayor of Cremona and all the authorities who have wished to be present at this meeting.

2. Your presence reminds me of my visit in November four years ago when your Bishop presented me with the *Book of the Synod* as a sign of obedience and fidelity to the Successor of Peter. It was the concluding act, sealing as it were the synodal journey and introducing, so to speak, the "Year of St. Homobonus" which you celebrated during the eighth centenary of the death and canonization of your patron saint, whose memory the Diocese and the city of Cremona have faithfully and devoutly preserved. The extraordinary figure of Homobonus, a cloth merchant, husband and father of a family, who was converted to the mystery of the Cross and became the "father of the poor", an artisan of reconciliation and peace, acquires exemplary value as a call to conversion. His example highlights the fact that holiness is not a vocation reserved for a few, but is meant for everyone.

Along with your illustrious patron there are three priests from your region who have reached the honour of the altars in the last 50 years. Vincenzo Grossi, beatified by Paul VI in the Holy Year 1975, the Camillian Enrico Rebuschini and Francesco Spinelli, whom I beatified. Always keep these exemplary figures before you, and may they spur and encourage everyone to follow the Gospel faithfully.

3. Dear brothers and sisters, you have come to Rome to cross the threshold of the Holy Door. This is a beautiful experience which, here at the heart of the Catholic world, over the tomb of the Apostle Peter and on the ground bathed with the blood of the first Roman martyrs, must be lived in depth. Jesus' statement: "I am with you always" is the support of the Christian, who becomes a repentant pilgrim in order to be strengthened in faith, hope and charity. This is what I hope for each of you, for your loved ones and for the whole diocesan community, with the special wish that the "House of Hope" that is being built on new foundations to accommodate those terminally ill with AIDS will fulfil the idea that inspired it: may it be a witness of charity from which

tomorrow's generation can deeply draw. Dear pilgrims of Cremona, I know that your four Jubilee churches, beginning with your magnificent cathedral, are all dedicated to Mary. This gladdens my heart. To her, "woman of silence, given to listening" (*Incarnationis mysterium*, n. 14), I entrust the needs of the Church of Cremona at the beginning of a new century and new millennium. With my affectionate blessing.

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