



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MEMBERS OF AN EXPEDITION
TO THE NORTH POLE**

Tuesday, 20 March 2001

Dear Brothers,

1. I gladly welcome you and I am pleased to extend my cordial greeting to each of you who are preparing for your forthcoming expedition to the North Pole. It is being made 100 years after the one made by Prince Luigi Amedeo di Savoia Aosta, Duke of the Abruzzi, in which the young mountaineering priest, Fr Achille Ratti, the future Pius XI, also wanted to take part but was prevented by unexpected setbacks at the last minute.

In a certain way, you would like to complete the arduous expedition of 1900 and to emulate the daring men who, in difficult conditions, resolved to achieve goals that no human being had ever achieved before. Following this undertaking and the subsequent expedition led by Umberto Nobile in 1928, you are preparing to bear witness to man's constant yearning to know little-explored pages in the marvellous book of creation. I am sure that your special journey will enable you to share the wonder of the Psalmist who exclaims with ecstatic wonder before nature's marvels: "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!".

2. Please God, you will reach the North Pole precisely on Easter Day and will be able to celebrate Holy Mass there. Thus you will be fulfilling the wish that Pius XI was unable to realize in his own time. You will also fulfil another desire of his: to plant the Cross of Christ in that furthest tip of the globe. The artistic astylar cross, which I am very pleased to bless today, portrays men and women in search of salvation. Led by the Successor of Peter, they meet Christ who died on the cross for us. He is the one Saviour of the world, yesterday, today and forever.

These two "signs" give your expedition a distinct missionary significance. By planting the "tree of

the cross" and renewing the Eucharistic sacrifice at the "ends of the earth", you intend to recall that human beings only find their true dimension when they can fix their gaze on Christ and abandon themselves totally to him.

In a special way, by celebrating the divine sacrifice at the North Pole on Easter Day itself, you want to make the proclamation of the risen Lord ring out loudly, to "the ends of the earth" (Acts 1: 8).

I warmly hope that this mission, so challenging and full of significance, may be crowned by full success and to this end I entrust each of you to the motherly protection of the Virgin Mary, "*Spes certa poli*". With these wishes, I wholeheartedly impart my Apostolic Blessing to you and willingly extend it to all who are taking part in your courageous initiative.