



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE UNITED BIBLE SOCIETIES
AND THE BIBLE SOCIETY IN ITALY**

Monday, 26 November 2001

Dearest brethren in Christ!

1. For me it is a great joy to meet you all, distinguished leaders of the United Biblical Societies (UBS), representatives of the Editors and members of Italian churches and ecclesiastical communities, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of "*Parola del Signore*" (Word of the Lord) the interconfessional common language Italian New Testament. Particularly I thank Dr. Markku Kotila, President of the European-Middle East UBS Committee and Mons. Albert Ablondi, President of the Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF) for the kind words you have addressed to me on behalf of those who are present.

As you have mentioned, in 25 years this important biblical and ecumenical initiative has reached praiseworthy goals that have gone beyond the expectations of those that conceived and began it. The publication of the interconfessional translation in the language of the common people has to be acknowledged as the ecumenical initiative with the best results in Italy. For a great number of our people, it will be a valid contribution to making known and familiar the Word of God.

2. It is well known that the work of a translator is a difficult art. It implies the commitment to put in contact and to create a communication among histories, cultures and languages sometimes very far from one another in space and in time. A good translation is based on three pillars that must simultaneously support the entire work. First there must be a deep knowledge of the original language and cultural world. Next, there must be a similar good familiarity with the language and the cultural context in and for which the text is translated. Lastly, to succeed in the whole work, there must be an adequate mastery of the contents and meanings of what is being translated.

In the interconfessional translation that you have edited, you have tried to be faithful to the tenor of the original text and at the same time you have tried to make the text understandable for the contemporary readers, using words and forms of everyday speech.

The exceptional circulation of this book shows the favour and great appreciation it received in many ecclesiastical and cultural environments. By the way I am pleased to recollect that this translation was used during the 15th World Youth Day, that took place in Rome, August 2000, as well as in many other ecumenical initiatives that took place during the Jubilee Year.

3. This work that you edited is one of the best and most significant fruits of the cooperation among churches and ecclesiastical communities in Italy. It is interesting to notice how the desire for a better comprehension of the sacred text promotes the overcoming of divisions that occurred during history, that indeed took their origin from different interpretations of certain biblical passages. All of us hope that such a possibility to meet and dialogue will increase, since we are convinced that "the Holy Scriptures are able to give us the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3,15).

I ask upon you and your precious work the abundant blessing of the Lord, and I hope that this interconfessional translation of the Bible will continue to have the greatest circulation. May the Word of God be always known better by the men and women of our time, be accepted with a sincere heart and be translated into the choices of real life.