



The Holy See

JOHN PAUL II

ANGELUS

First Sunday of Lent
Sunday, 13 February 2005

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. Welcome! Once again we meet in this place to praise the Lord. I would like to thank you - and all those who are following us via radio and television - for your closeness and affection, and above all for your prayers during the days of my stay at the Gemelli Polyclinic.

I always feel in need of your help before the Lord in order to carry out the mission that Jesus has entrusted to me.

2. Last Wednesday, with the rite of Ashes, we began *Lent*, the liturgical season that reminds us every year of a fundamental truth: we do not enter eternal life without bearing our cross in union with Christ. We do not attain happiness and peace without courageously facing inner combat. This combat is won with the weapons of penance: prayer, fasting and works of mercy. All this must be done in secret, without hypocrisy, in a spirit of sincere love for God and our brothers and sisters.

3. This evening I will begin *spiritual exercises*, as I do every year, together with my collaborators in the Curia. In silence and recollection I will pray to the Lord for all the needs of the Church and of the world. I also ask you, dear brothers and sisters, to accompany us with your prayers.

May Mary Most Holy, who in the midst of her daily tasks always kept in her mind and heart the mystery of her Son, guide us to carry out a fruitful Lenten journey.

After the Angelus the Pope said:

While I continue to pray for peace in the Middle East, I address my heartfelt appeal for the release of Giuliana Sgrena, the Italian journalist, and all who have been kidnapped in Iraq.

I cordially greet the French-speaking pilgrims, especially the school of faith from Fribourg. A good Lent to all.

I greet all the English-speaking pilgrims, including the members of the Schola Cantorum of the Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School, London. May God bless you and your families!

I greet with affection the Spanish-speaking pilgrims, particularly those from Extremadura. Intensify your journey of conversion with prayer, almsgiving and fasting. Thank you very much!

I greet the Italian-speaking pilgrims, especially the faithful from the Parishes of Sts Peter and Paul in Mezzate and St Francis in Pavia, as well as the confirmandi from the Parish of St Mary in Torregalli in Scandicci.

I wish you all a good Sunday!

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