



# The Holy See

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## ***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO A GROUP OF FLORENTINE WORKERS***

*Saturday, 24 March 1979*

Welcome, beloved sons! Your visit is a particularly welcome one: you come from Florence, a city well known and loved all over the world for the nobility of its traditions and the splendour of its art. Your presence reawakens in my heart the deep emotions impressed on it in the past, when I had the opportunity to contemplate the architectural marvels, revealed to the eyes of the admiring tourist; or when I was able to stop, mingling with the visitors, in front of the frescoes of churches, the altarpieces, the paintings preserved in the art galleries; or when I wore myself out observing with ever new wonder the sculptures that adorn the squares and enrich the museums; or, finally, when I went up to Piazzale Michelangelo to enjoy the sight of the city stretched on the banks of the Arno, in the circle of the hills fading in the twilight of evening.

Florence is a city unique in the world; those who have the honour of living there must be aware of the commitment this involves: the priceless riches of history, art, and faith with which the inhabitants of ancient times enriched temples, buildings, quarters, remain for succeeding generations, and therefore also for yours, as a perennial call to a stimulating and creative confrontation. The nobility of sentiments, the generosity of spirit, the courtesy of manners, which distinguished the best citizens of those glorious times, must be a binding order also for the present inhabitants of Florence.

This holds good particularly for those who, like you, employed in State Monopolies, carry out a service that entails assiduous contact with the heterogeneous public of tourists; and it applies in a very special way to you, who are employed in the Street-cleaning Service, and who have the task of renewing, every day, all the freshness of its fascination, the marvellous face of the city. Who can fail to recognize, in fact, the beneficial influence that decorum, order and good taste have on the spirit of man, especially when they contribute to ensuring the perfect order of an environment which is the setting for priceless treasures of beauty? Familiarity with these values becomes for

man a kind of school which educates him and, gradually, opens him up to perception of a world of higher values, which, transcending sensible realities, introduce him to contemplation of absolute Beauty, which shines forth on God's own face.

The Pope's wish is that this awareness will guide and sustain your daily toil. I entrust these wishes of mine to the motherly protection of her whom we venerate today in the mystery of her Annunciation. This is a mystery particularly dear to the Marian soul of your city which, in ancient times, even made the beginning of the year coincide with this central day of the mystery of salvation. What immortal masterpieces have sprung from the inspired brush of your painters, when they tried—and how often they did so—to express in the magic of lines and colours the emotions felt in the presence of that dialogue, in which the fate of the whole of humanity was decided! Renewing to the Blessed Virgin the expression of our common gratitude for that "fiat", which restored joy and hope to us all, I willingly grant to you and to your families my Apostolic Blessing, a token of fatherly benevolence and an auspice of the choicest gifts of Heaven.

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