



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO MEMBERS OF THE
SAINTS PETER AND PAUL ASSOCIATION**

Saturday, 28 June 1997

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. I am pleased to welcome you for the 25th anniversary of the foundation of the "Association of Sts Peter and Paul", an association desired by my venerable Predecessor Paul VI. I extend my greeting to each one of you with the words of the Apostle Peter: "To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ: grace and peace" (2 Pt 1:1-2).

I thank Mr Gianluigi Marrone who has expressed the sentiments of all, your chaplain Mons. Carmelo Nicolosi, and his assistant, Mons. Franco Follo. I add a particular remembrance for Mr Pietro Rossi, President emeritus, and Archbishop Giovanni Coppa, the first chaplain, now Apostolic Nuncio in the Czech Republic, and the late Mons. Nicolino Sarale, who spent much of his priestly energy among you.

2. Twenty-five years have passed since Paul VI of venerable memory wanted the great tradition of the Palatine Guard of Honour to continue in a way more in keeping with the changing times. These 25 years of activity document that the tradition was wisely developed in line with its original spirit.

In keeping with the motto inherited from the Palatine Guard: "*Fide constamus avita*", you have not only persevered in the faith received, but grown in it through your careful catechetical meetings, your active liturgical service in St Peter's Basilica and your charitable activity in the *Dono di Maria* Home and at the dispensary for immigrant children, next door to the *Casa Santa Marta*. The presence among you of some Missionaries of Charity and Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul

makes one think that, in a certain sense, they are also part of your family association collaborating, when possible, with silent and precious assistance to many needy brothers and sisters.

3. Today, together with my appreciation of the skilled help you offer the Successor of Peter and his charitable ministry, I would like to express my gratitude for the work you carry out in Vatican City. Thank you for your many services and above all for your dedicated spirit in fulfilling them! Persevere in your initiatives, ever deeply mindful of the Apostle Paul's exhortation: "*Veritatem facientes in caritate*" (Eph 4:15): profess the truth in love. This expression indicates the fundamental law which, with the help of divine grace, sustains Christian life. To "profess the truth in love" is possible when the life of believers grows and is nourished by actions sustained by sanctifying grace and oriented to God in charity, urged by the awareness that faith without works is dead (cf. Jas 2:17).

The works that faith needs in order to live are suggested by God's loving will, contained in the commandments. The strength to express that will in action is guaranteed by grace, whose source is the Incarnate Word: "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (Jn 1:17).

I therefore urge you to be always united to Christ like the branches to the vine, so that proclamation and witness to truth are united to love and take place in love. Indeed, the truth of the Gospel is fulfilled and manifested in love.

By living the truth in love, you take part in building the Church and in the growth of the whole world, in the footsteps of Jesus Christ who is its Head and Lord.

4. Dear brothers and sisters, continue in your generous work with the dedication you have always had. May the approach of the Great Jubilee increase your enthusiasm, because the jubilee celebrations will demand an even greater commitment from you, especially with regard to "guarding" the Holy Door of the Vatican Basilica. You previously rendered this service of honour and love during the Holy Year of 1975 and during the Extraordinary Holy Year of 1983. It will bring you into daily contact with many pilgrims who will pass through this Door to enter the Basilica, and to whom you will be required to give attentive assistance.

Dear members of the Association of Sts Peter and Paul, I would like to conclude this meeting by renewing my invitation to be always authentic and "special" witnesses to the love of God, as your statutes clearly indicate. I entrust you to Mary, *Virgo Fidelis*, together with your families and all your loved ones. May the Blessed Virgin watch over you with her maternal love and obtain for you from the Redeemer the gifts of perseverance in happiness and serenity.

May you also be accompanied by my Blessing which I willingly extend to your families, especially

remembering the children and those who are ill.

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