



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO CHIAVARI AND BRESCIA (ITALY)
(SEPTEMBER 18-20, 1998)

***ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
ON HIS ARRIVAL IN BRESCIA
AT THE START OF HIS PASTORAL VISIT***

Saturday, 19 September 1998

Dear Brothers and Sisters of Brescia,

1. Here I am for the second time in the heart of your city, in this historic square which you have wished to dedicate to my venerable Predecessor and your illustrious fellow citizen, the Servant of God Paul VI.

Here, these prestigious buildings — the cathedral, with the ancient Romanesque cathedral next to it and the Broletto — recall your noble and history laden past, but above all they attest to the dedicated collaboration between civil and religious society, and point to the encounter with God and to moral and social engagement as the secret of the path to civilization and well-being taken by the city.

Thank you for your affectionate welcome, which reaffirms the Brescian people's ancient tradition of fidelity to the Pope. I particularly thank Minister Beniamino Andreatta for his courteous words on behalf of the Italian Government. I also extend my gratitude to the Mayor, who has expressed the heartfelt sentiments and joyful welcome of all the citizens.

I greet the revered Pastor of the Diocese, Archbishop Bruno Foresti, and his Auxiliary, and I extend a respectful greeting to the President of the Lombard Region, as well as to the authorities who honour this meeting with their presence.

2. *"Brixia Fidelis Fidei et Iustitiae".*

This ancient motto epitomizes Brescia's identity, as is also evidenced by her famous monuments. They form the visible

sign of the values handed down by past generations and still present in the hearts and culture of its inhabitants, and they attest to the wonderful synthesis of faith and ordered coexistence, love of their own land and solidarity with every human being. These values inspired Brescians in the past and must continue to serve as a standard for citizens today, to ensure their city a future of genuine progress.

My thoughts turn to *the missionaries*, men and women of great heart who learned here to love God and neighbour and, strengthened by this experience, brought the joyous message of the Gospel to various parts of the world, sowing new hope and promoting living conditions more worthy of man. I am thinking of *the founders of religious institutes* and of *the many priests*, who were zealous witnesses to Christ and true teachers of life in your land. I would also like to recall with great admiration all the parents who have found in their deep and active faith, in their love for their families and in honest work, the secret to building your land's authentic progress. Nor would I like to forget the contribution of genuine intellectuals and the *sponsors of the many cultural and charitable institutions* which have flourished in the Brescian region, as well as *the artisans of the economic development* that marks your city and your province.

It is precisely in this regard that I said to you during my first visit: "Brescia possesses a precious spiritual, cultural and social heritage, which must be jealously guarded and vigorously increased, inasmuch as also today, just as in the past, it constitutes the indispensable basis for a wise civil organization and for the authentic development of mankind" (*Address to the Civil Authorities of Brescia*, 26 September 1982, n. 3; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 8 November 1982, p. 9).

As the above-mentioned inscription carved on the pediment of the Loggia stresses, building a future of civilization and progress requires a twofold, inseparable commitment of fidelity: *to the Gospel*, the precious and vital root of your civil society, and *to humanity*, concrete and alive, that is, to the individual "who thinks, loves and works, who is always expecting something" (*Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, II [1964], 729). This involves a commitment to embody in both private and community life the religious, anthropological and ethical principles which stem from faith in Jesus Christ, to be ever attentive to the rapid changes and new challenges of the present time, and to have the courage to express this evangelical inspiration in works, programmes and institutions that can meet the authentic needs of the human person and of society.

3. In this arduous but exalting task, your teacher is my venerable Predecessor Paul VI, to whom I have come to pay homage at the end of the celebrations for the centenary of his birth in this city, to which he always felt honoured to belong "by birth and never-failing affection", as he said once (*Address to the Mayor and Council of Brescia*, 10 December 1977; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 5 January 1978, p. 3).

He was the sturdy helmsman of Peter's barque in difficult times for the Church and for humanity, and was always motivated by a strong, deep love for Christ and a burning desire to proclaim him to his contemporaries, who were often bewildered by the new and pressing doctrines and events. The memory of his personality as a man of God, of dialogue and of peace, a person firmly anchored to the Church's faith and always attentive to the hopes and tragedies of his brethren, becomes ever more vivid with the passing of time and also offers valuable encouragement to believers today.

The elements that join a person's greatness and exceptional qualities to his roots and to a people's talent are mysterious,

but it seems evident that Brescia made a decisive contribution to his human and religious formation with its faith, its culture, its history, its sufferings and its achievements. In this community, of which he always cherished a grateful memory and sweet nostalgia in his heart, the young Montini found a fervent atmosphere teeming with new ferment, as well as capable teachers who were able to instil in him an interest in learning, attention to the signs of the times, and above all, the search for the wisdom which is born of faith, a precious quality for undertaking the serious tasks to which Providence had called him.

4. Giuseppe Tovini, an exceptional witness to the religious, cultural and social context which had such an influence on the formation of the future Paul VI, is the servant of God whom I will have the joy of beatifying tomorrow, here in Brescia, where he worked and bore witness by an admirable life to the unforeseeable opportunities for doing good which a man is capable of if he lets himself be seized by Christ.

This layman, the loving father of a family, a rigorous and conscientious professional, died the year that Giovanni Battista Montini was born. He urged Catholics to assert the values of the Gospel in society, by creating educational and social works, cultural clubs, working committees and exceptional endeavours.

At a time when some sought to confine the faith within the walls of sacred buildings, Giuseppe Tovini showed that adherence to Christ and obedience to the Church, far from estranging the believer from history, spur him to be the leaven of authentic civilization and social progress. He was an apostle of Christian education and an outstanding leader of that Catholic movement which made a deep impression on all Italian society at the end of the 19th century.

5. Dear Brescians, the luminous figures of Paul VI and Giuseppe Tovini, the boast of your land, are a precious heritage, which I exhort you to accept with renewed love, in order to make Christian values the driving force of an original cultural, human and civil project worthy of your land's vocation. Walk courageously on the ways of truth and justice. Always be confident and daring in seeking and building what is good. May Christ, the Redeemer of man, be your hope!

And you, Brescia, "*Fidelis Fidei et Iustitiae*", rediscover this rich heritage of ideals which constitutes your truest wealth so that you can be a living centre radiating the new civilization, the *civilization of love* desired by your great son, Paul VI!

As I invoke the protection of Our Lady of Grace, venerated in the city shrine so dear to Pope Paul VI and to the citizens of Brescia, I cordially impart my Blessing to you all.