



# The Holy See

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***ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE REPRESENTATIVES  
OF THE WORLD OF WORK OF ROME***

*Solemnity of St Joseph, 19 March 1999*

*Dear Representatives of the world of work,*

1. I am pleased to welcome you at this special audience on the Solemnity of St Joseph, husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary and guardian of the Redeemer. Like you, he was a worker, a carpenter. No one can understand your problems better than he, so his feast day is particularly appropriate for this meeting.

As I welcome each one of you, I affectionately greet the relatives who have come with you. I extend a respectful greeting to the Mayor of Rome and to the presidents and directors of your companies present here. I thank the president of the ACEA and the employee of the AMA for their cordial addresses on everyone's behalf, and I am grateful to the ATAC band for the festive notes with which they have accompanied our meeting. I also thank the Vicar, Cardinal Camillo Ruini, for his words and I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Diocese of Rome for carrying out the mission in the living and working milieus, and here I am thinking especially of your chaplains and their precious service.

2. Four years have passed since, in Piazza di Spagna at the foot of the statue of the Immaculate Conception, I asked that Rome prepare itself for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 with a city mission. Your presence here today is a significant testimony of the ground that has been covered. In fact, the mission in the work place is the final but not conclusive stage of the various projects developed during these years. Starting with the visits to families we have gone on to meet those who live in the areas of their work and who share the same daily labour. After the example of the first believers, we too must feel committed to proclaiming the "Good News" of Jesus Christ. We need to repeat every day with the Apostle Paul: "For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" (1 Cor 9:16).

The mission in the various milieus of social life challenges you to find the forms most in keeping with the new evangelization and the language most suited to it. Each of you is entrusted with the task of finding the way to proclaim the Gospel in the places where you work. Sometimes, especially in a

direct encounter with people, an explicit proclamation is needed without ever feeling ashamed of being Christians; in other circumstances perhaps, silence would be more beneficial, to give more room to the power of witness. In each of these cases, however, you can never forget that the mission is an essential part of the Christian faith.

3. Dear workers, your presence is all the dearer to me for various reasons. In the first place, because your work is representative of civic life. Indeed you provide a major part of those services that are indispensable to a city, if it is to have human features. Light, water, transport, cleanliness... are all precious elements for the citizens. What would life in Rome be without your daily work? Then, in view of the Jubilee, when the stream of visitors to the city will increase, your work will become even more important because, thanks to your services, you will help pilgrims get a better picture of the beauty of what the human genius has achieved in our Rome down the centuries. In this way you will contribute to highlighting the fascination that emanates from each of its stones and age-old monuments.

Present among you are 200 workers of the Italian Social Security. It is given to you too, dear brothers and sisters, to carry out the most useful task of ensuring an adequate pension to those who have dedicated so many years of their life to work, as well as for those who, for various reasons, have found themselves in situations of difficulty or marginalization. Work with generosity and concern so that the period of waiting can be shortened and the resources available to social security, which are certainly not abundant, used in the way most useful to society.

Today, I am thinking in a special way of those who are still looking for their first position. For many young people, unemployment creates situations of anxiety and sometimes, deep disappointment. They see themselves barred de facto from assuming direct responsibility in society and are often forced to delay starting a family. If this situation lasts too long it becomes dangerous and unbearable, creating a barrier between individuals and society, and gives rise to a sense of distrust which does not help the development of a civic consciousness.

4. These thoughts, which the feast of St Joseph gives me the opportunity to express to you who are present here, and through you to all the workers of the Diocese of Rome, aim to emphasize the value of work and the importance of fighting unemployment. The purpose of the mission which has been taking place in the various milieus is to remind all believers that their attention to the weakest and the most defenceless must not stop: we are Christian always and everywhere. If the parish is the privileged place where the growth of faith can be supported through participation in the sacramental life and in the different community events, it is in the world of work that witness is borne to what is believed, especially through the outreach of charity. Sometimes work, either because of the organization of time shifts or the establishing of time schedules and deadlines, causes feelings of hardship. It can happen that some, lured by the perspective of promotion, go so far as to falsify their own relationship with their colleagues. In that case, solidarity suffers and the sincerity and friendship of mutual relationships are replaced by suspicion and criticism, resulting in

the person's withdrawal into himself. This attitude is false and deceptive. May it not happen to you: at the work place, live openly the principal content of the faith you profess: that is, the love of Christ who generously and gratuitously goes to meet everyone.

In recent weeks, the missionaries have brought you a Letter from me, in addition to the crucifix. With it, I have sought to be close to you in the difficult but nonetheless always interesting adventure of work which aims to continue the creative work of God the Father. I ask that all of you be witnesses of hope: a hope that looks to the future without subjecting itself to the numerous daily problems, but founded on the certitude of God's presence. Fortified by this hope, we will cross the threshold of the third millennium, bearing in our hearts the conviction that we must proclaim Christ with all our strength to those we meet on our way, to help them rediscover life's meaning in the personal encounter with our Lord Jesus Christ.

As I look forward to welcoming you again for the Pentecost Vigil at which we will thank the Father together for the great gift of the city mission, I cordially bless you and your families, asking the Lord, through the intercession of St Joseph and the Virgin Mary, to make your work a source of authentic brotherhood and trust in life for everyone.