



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY OF ROME

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. At the beginning of the great gathering of the Diocesan Assembly, meeting in the Basilica of St John Lateran, I would like to extend my good wishes to you.

This Assembly is the response to the invitation I addressed to you at the end of the City Mission, on the Vigil of Pentecost in 1999, saying that "a specific reflection must be fostered which will involve all sectors of the Church and result in a special convention ... which will have as its goal to draw up the clear lines of the important work of evangelization and missionary outreach on the basis of the experience of the City Mission".

I know that you have been preparing for some time for this important meeting through prayer, spiritual and pastoral discernment and the formulation of practical proposals by every parish and diocesan institution.

On the basis of the working document drawn up in October 2000, you have concluded a phase of listening and of dialogue which involved priests, men and women religious and the laity, especially members of Pastoral Councils, missionaries and all those who are occupied in the service of the Church and the Christian formation of society.

The Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte* and the Letter of 14 February that I sent to the Diocese, readily received and lovingly pondered, have been a sure guide in the preparation of the Assembly and remain a most important reference for preparing the pastoral plan for the coming years.

2. "Set out anew from Christ for the permanent mission in the city": this motto, at the centre of your reflection, expresses well the objective and content of the Assembly.

Jesus Christ, with his living presence and his message, should mould the life of every believer and of every community, for a strong and credible witness. So we ask the Lord that holiness may be for us the "high standard of ordinary Christian living" (*Novo Millennio ineunte*, n. 31), so that the proclamation of Christ may reach all the men and women of our city and be the source of conversion and renewal for personal and family life, as for every sphere of work and culture.

Reinforce the Word of God; Eucharist and an ongoing school of prayer bring union with Christ
I ask you to give great importance to listening to the Word of God, to making everyone appreciate the Eucharist, especially Sunday Mass, to making parishes and ecclesial realities a permanent "school" of prayer, "where the meeting with Christ is expressed not just in imploring help but also in thanksgiving, praise, adoration contemplation, listening and ardent devotion, until the heart truly "falls in love" (*ibid.*, n. 33).

3. From intimacy and familiarity with the Lord is born that deep union with him that is at the root of the spirituality of communion: Father I ask you that my disciples "may all be one; as you, Father, are in me, and I am in you, that they may also be even in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn 17,21). Christ's prayer for the unity of his disciples that sustains and enlivens the journey, requires first of all the full and sincere unity of all vocations, ministries and pastoral expressions of which the Church of Rome is full. May all our parishes and communities be homes where one experiences communion as something that is lived (cf. *Novo Millennio ineunte*, n. 43).

We need to go forward united on the paths of the mission, sustained by communities where fraternal love is lived as an educational principle by every baptized person, an exercise in mutual acceptance, listening and pardon, most of all for those who are weakest in their faith, for the little ones, the poor in whom the Lord Jesus is particularly present.

4. The celebration of the Diocesan Assembly is a moment of grace for consolidating our communion with Christ and our ecumenical communion. Thus, guided by the Holy Spirit, you will be able to discern the most suitable ways to carry out the permanent mission in our city and to respond to expectations of the universal Church towards whom the Church of Rome has, by divine disposition, a special care.

I make a special request to you, dear Reverend Fathers, to direct and encourage everyone to "put out into the deep", in order to bring the Gospel into homes, workplaces, neighbourhoods and the entire city. You are called to form missionaries, to instil apostolic courage in them, and to give the example of a life lived for the Gospel with the burning desire of the Good Shepherd: "I must bring them also...." (Jn 10,16).

I ask Christian families to open their homes in order to welcome other brothers and sisters in the centres for listening to the Gospel and to take to heart more fully the situations of moral, spiritual

or material difficulty into which many families fall. You should offer them the concrete witness of friendship, listening and sharing.

I ask you, men and women religious and lay people, who have been very active in the various initiatives of the city mission, to keep alive, in you and in your communities, the enthusiasm to "go out" to witness and announce the Gospel in the great "open sea" of the world of work, of culture and of society.

I renew to young people the invitation I made to them at Tor Vergata to be "sentinels" of the third millennium just begun. Dear young people, do not shrink back in the face of the more demanding calls that the Lord addresses to you. Do not be afraid to offer the Gospel joyfully and simply to your companions, in schools, universities, at work, in free time, in every place where you gather.

5. Dear friends, awaiting the results of your Assembly, I assure you of my prayers that the Holy Spirit direct your work towards a new season of grace for the Church of Rome and her missionary outreach. I ask a special prayer from all our cloistered sisters who can give the most precious contribution to this objective.

I thank the Cardinal Vicar, the Vicegerent, the Auxiliary Bishops and each of you who have participated in this Assembly. You are the living and generous forces our Diocese counts on, to bring to all the residents of this city the proclamation of the Risen Lord, the testimony of love and his peace.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, *Salus Populi Romani*, the Apostles Peter and Paul and all the saints of the Church of Rome help the work of the Assembly with their intercession, that it may produce abundant fruits of grace.

With these wishes and as a sign of my affection, I impart to you and to the whole Diocese my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 7 June 2001

JOHN PAUL II