



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES
HELD FOR THE ROMAN CURIA**

Saturday, 10 March 2001

1. We have finished the spiritual exercises with a meditation on the "*Magnificat*". I would like my brief remarks to echo Mary's canticle, expressing in her words our heartfelt gratitude to the Lord for all he has given us during these days of silence and recollection.

The preaching of dear Cardinal Francis Eugene George, Archbishop of Chicago, has led us in our contemplation of the divine mysteries. I express my most cordial thanks to you, venerable Brother, also on behalf of the Cardinals and prelates of the Roman Curia who took part in the exercises.

Your sober personal style made the Gospel word stand out in all its power. You truly made us feel that St Luke was our traveling companion on this Lenten journey. You combined your reflection on the biblical text with stimulating examples drawn from your rich experience as a missionary and Bishop: they encouraged the application of these reflections to life. On the great themes of conversion, freedom and communion, you led us each day to contemplate Christ and to deepen our faith in him, this faith which is "for all peoples".

2. Frequent references were also made to the documents written after the recent continental Synods. This helped to give our retreat an intensely apostolic tone, which was particularly appropriate in the ecclesial period we are experiencing immediately after the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000.

It is a period that I wanted to be marked by Christ's words to Peter: "*Duc in altum*", "Put out into the deep" (Lk 5: 4). We know what Simon's answer was: "At your word I will let down the nets" (Lk 5: 5). "At your word": this is what we wanted to do during these days. We stayed listening to the Lord in order to strengthen our faith with the Holy Spirit's help, to reinforce our hope, to revive our

love. Trusting in the efficacy of Christ's words, the Church casts her nets into the vast ocean of the new millennium which has just begun. It is an unusual net: those caught in it are set free! In fact, faith in Christ is a freedom that is born of personal conversion and opens men and women to communion with all people.

3. Thank you, Your Eminence, for guiding us on this journey. May the Lord himself reward you. On our part, we assure you of a remembrance in our prayer and call upon the maternal assistance of the Immaculate Virgin, Mother of your missionary consecration, for you and for your ministry. I also extend my cordial thanks to those who contributed to the success of the spiritual exercises with regard to the liturgical celebrations and the service of hospitality.

May Mary help us to treasure the spiritual gifts we have received during these spiritual exercises and to continue our Lenten journey with renewed enthusiasm. With these sentiments I gladly impart a special Apostolic Blessing to you all.