



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO THE MEMBERS

OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE "ARCHE" Friday, 15 May 1987

Dear Friends,

I am happy to welcome you, the directors and members of the International Federation of the "Arche". In our present-day society, which is sometimes described in terms that are excessively negative, there exist wonderful humanitarian endeavours and movements of evangelical inspiration, whose efforts are completely dedicated to the loving service of those persons who are marked in body or in spirit by suffering or a handicap of one kind or another. The "Arche" is one such initiative. It is a source of joy for the Pope to meet you and to encourage you in your good work. It is my prayerful hope that you will continue and increase in your care of the young, of the poor, of the handicapped of all ages. In this you are bearing witness to the Good News brought to the world by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. You are contributing to the effective realization of that Good News. In the name of the Church, I thank you for acting with respect for the human person and for his or her inalienable dignity. I am aware that the religious dimension plays an important part in the life of the "Arches", even if it varies from one Foyer to another. Opportunities for individual and community prayer are offered; the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Penance are celebrated frequently; appropriate spiritual retreats are organized. Indeed, by means of these different forms of encounter with him, the Lord offers light, peace and joy to those who are gathered in the "Arches". And to your great happiness, these same people are often capable of wonderful spiritual progress. The extension of your movement leads you to welcome young people and adults of different religious denominations. In this regard, you know how important it is always to respect the faith of each person and to encourage understanding and mutual esteem. Yours is a representative group of lay men and women, responsible for the life and activity of the "Arches". I would ask you, as members of the laity, to pray in a special way for the work of the Synod of Bishops, which will take place here in Rome next October, on the Mission of the Christian Laity in the Church. This will be the first Synod to deal with this important question. On the eve of the opening of a year specially dedicated to Mary, Mother of the Redeemer, I earnestly invite you and all the residents of the "Arches" to direct your hearts and prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary,

Mother of Christ and of the Church. Dear Friends, may the witness of your closeness to those who suffer, your respect and kindness towards them, your selfless service, your evangelical and ecclesial spirit, shine forth, so that our contemporaries "may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (*Matth.* 5, 15). On all of you, priests and laity present here, and on all the "Arches" throughout the world, I invoke Almighty God's abundant graces and blessings.

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