



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE HIS HOLINESS
JOHN PAUL II
AT MASS FOR SICK**

Tuesday, 11 February 1997

*Your Eminences,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

1. I am pleased to extend to you all a cordial greeting at the end of the Mass celebrating the Fifth World Day of the Sick, on the liturgical memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes.

This Day takes us in spirit to the grotto of Massabielle, to pause in prayer and to commend to the Blessed Virgin, *Salus infirmorum*, all the sick, especially those who are the most sorely tried in body and spirit.

The *official celebration* is taking place today at the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima, particularly dear to me and highly significant in the present phase of preparation for the Jubilee of the Year 2000. The Blessed Virgin's message at *Fatima* — as at Lourdes — is *a call to conversion and penance*, without which there can be no authentic Jubilee.

For the human person sickness is also a call to conversion, to entrust oneself entirely to Christ, the one source of salvation for every man and for the whole man. The theme of the convention sponsored by the Opera Romana Pellegrinaggi, which re-echoes the universal call of the first year of preparation for the Jubilee, invites us to do this.

2. My affectionate thoughts are especially addressed to the many sick people present; I cordially extend them to all the sick who have joined us by radio and television. May Our Lady, dear brothers and sisters, obtain for each one of you comfort of soul and body. I also willingly bless

those who have accompanied the sick, the volunteers and the members of the UNITALSI gathered here, and I thank them for the valuable apostolic work they are doing for the sick in escorting them to various Marian shrines.

I likewise thank the Monteverdi Choir and the Philharmonic Society of Crespano del Grappa for enlivening the liturgy today and for their inspiring performances. I am also grateful for the gift of a precious reproduction of the statue of Our Lady of Monte Grappa, who watches over the monumental cemetery where thousands of soldiers who died in the First World War are laid to rest. Let us pray for them on this occasion.

3. Every year, the Opera Romana Pellegrinaggi suggests a *prophetic gesture of peace*: this year it plans a *pilgrimage to Hebron* to the tomb of the Patriarchs, a holy place for the three great monotheistic religions, as a harbinger of peace in the Holy Land.

I pray that this initiative, in the name of our common father Abraham, may be the beginning of a new flowering of reconciliation pilgrimages for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. May Rome and Jerusalem become the poles of a universal pilgrimage of peace, sustained by faith in the one, good and merciful God. For this intention, I invite you, dear sick people, to raise to the Lord fervent prayers enriched by the offering of your suffering.

4. Let us now, spiritually united with the pilgrims gathered at the shrine of Lourdes and those who are in Fatima to celebrate the World Day of the Sick, turn to Mary with trust, invoking her motherly protection.

I cordially bless you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.