



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO THE ITALIAN ODONTOLOGISTS HOLDING NATIONAL CONGRESS IN ROME

Tuesday, 28 March 2000 1. I extend my cordial greetings to each of you, distinguished teachers of odontology, who have come on pilgrimage to Rome from all over Italy to celebrate your Jubilee. Thank you for your visit! In particular I thank Prof. Giovanni Dolci, President of your National Congress, and I extend my sentiments of esteem and appreciation to the representatives of the associations and industries in this sector. I fervently hope that the Holy Year will be an extraordinary occasion of grace for each of you and your families. This is what the Jubilee is meant to be: a pressing invitation to respond to the gift of salvation with deep renewal of heart, expressed in a process of interior conversion. The Holy Door, through which you have had an opportunity to pass with faith and devotion, is an eloquent symbol of the new life which Christ himself brought us by his Death and Resurrection.² You have most appropriately desired to celebrate your Jubilee during the national meeting of odontologists. You have thus emphasized that your work is not limited to the technical dimension: it is also a mission which calls you to put your professional competence at the service of your neighbour, in whom, as believers, you see a reflection of Christ's face (cf. *Mt* 25: 40). The worthy institution to which you belong has as its goal scientific progress in odontology and in the university teaching of various specialization courses: it thus acquires a broader perspective, all to the advantage of the human person. This is why your profession needs constant updating at both the technical and human levels, with particular attention to the ethical and moral questions arising in your daily work. In this regard, during your three-day congress of study and discussion you have sought to identify the most appropriate methods and techniques to prevent infection but, at the same time, you have asked yourselves how to practise suitable forms of solidarity and international cooperation for the sake of those in need. You have closely examined the new opportunities afforded by the medical and health sciences, and, at the same time, you have studied how to meet the needs of disabled and elderly patients. In expressing my appreciation of these prospective efforts, I would like to invite you to persevere in your generous intentions, so that each of you will always regard the service that you offer individuals and society as a service to neighbour and especially to the suffering.³ The image which naturally applies to you who are called to help the suffering is that of the Good Samaritan, who was moved by compassion for the man attacked by robbers and left by the road. The Good Samaritan *par excellence* is Jesus. May he be your model. May he, who went about doing good and healing all who turned to him (cf. *Acts* 10: 38), help you to dedicate yourselves with generous care to all who come to you. Making use of all your possibilities, be promoters of solidarity in Italy and in other countries by training and updating new generations of professionals who are well-prepared and responsible. Study the best ways to offer countries with no access to the latest odontological care the scientific and technical help they need. With the inventiveness that springs from love, may you find answers that are attentive to the

needs of your poor neighbour and respectful of the dignity belonging to every human being.⁴ Dear brothers and sisters, the Jubilee Year reminds us that Christ also came to bring contemporary man a superabundance of the heavenly Father's grace. Accept his gift with a willing heart, with the awareness that God wants all his children to be saved. In the mysterious presence of suffering, which touches the lives of many brothers and sisters, be instruments and witnesses of his divine goodness. In the faces of the sorely tried, the enlightened eye of faith can recognize the features of Christ's face: the "man of suffering" who redeemed the world by his Cross. May the Blessed Virgin, refuge and health of the sick, always accompany you in your work, which should be inspired by these ideals. With these sentiments, I invoke divine assistance upon you, as I cordially impart to you my Apostolic Blessing, which I willingly extend to your families and your loved ones. © Copyright 2000 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

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