



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE SUPERIOR GENERAL OF THE ORDER OF MINIMS ON THE OCCASION OF THE FIRST "MARCH OF PENANCE"

To the Very Reverend Father Giuseppe Fiorini Morosini

*Superior General of the Order of Minims*¹. I learned with pleasure that the first "March of Penance" will be taking place this 2 April in the city of Paola. It has the approval of Archbishop Giuseppe Agostino, the diocesan archbishop, and is organized by the Order's Council for Youth Ministry. Young people in particular are invited to take part in it. I am delighted to address a cordial welcome and greeting to you, dear Father, to the organizers, to your confreres and to all who will be taking part in this excellent initiative, which is to take place every year on the anniversary of the death of St Francis of Paola.² The timely event is taking place this year in a period marked by many anxieties and much suffering, due to the current war. It is a particularly apt moment, therefore, to invite reflection and to pray for the fundamental gift of peace for humanity. In a certain sense, it is a spiritual follow-up to the "Day of Prayer and Fasting" with which Lent began. These powerful spiritual moments help us become more and more conscious of the urgent need to build peace, even at the cost of personal sacrifices. We must be prepared to give up even something legitimate with a view to a greater good. It is necessary above all to be aware that we can obtain everything from God with prayer. At the same time, the March can become a school of life because it makes possible reference to the shining example and teaching of the Saint of Paola, who did not hesitate to put his own choice of Gospel penitence at the service of the Church and of society.³ The Saint lived in a time that was not without hardship and problems due to long drawn-out conflicts. He was committed to working for peace, doing penance as well as mediating between hostile parties. In 1494, while dense clouds were gathering over Italy, he confided: "I am striving to pray for peace". He described peace as "the greatest treasure that peoples can have", and "a holy product for which it is worth paying a high price". Very Reverend Father, I encourage you, your confreres and the young participants in the March to accept with compliance, at the school of the Saint of Paola, the "sweet teaching" of Gospel penitence, in order to learn the true secret of peace. As the Saint himself taught, the achievement of peace at every level is linked to conversion of heart and a real change of life. I warmly hope that the "March of Penance" will contribute to developing in the consciences of the new generations a sincere determination for peace, which they should foster with a process of personal self-denial in a spirit of repentance. With these sentiments, as I invoke the heavenly intercession of the Virgin Mary, Queen of Peace, and of St Francis of Paola, I impart with affection to the Pastor of the Archdiocese, to you, Very Reverend Father, and to the entire Order of Minims, to the organizers, to the young people and to all the participants in the penitential March, a special Apostolic Blessing.

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