



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO A GROUP OF YOUNG TORCH-BEARERS

18 March 1979

Dear Young Torch-bearers!

Welcome to the house of the Pope who now receives you with great sympathy and good will, together with your zealous Archbishop, Monsignor Alberti, the Abbot of Subiaco, Father Stanislao Andreotti, the Civil Authorities and all those, ecclesiastics and laity, who constitute the Committee for the Celebrations of the fifteenth Centenary of the birth of St Benedict, Abbot, and of his sister St Scholastica—illustrious and venerated children of the noble Umbrian land, the elect country of Saints.

I am very grateful to Mr Mayor of Ascoli Piceno for the words he kindly addressed to me, and to all of you for the delicate thought of coming here to receive my blessing, before beginning the march of the "Benedictine Torch". This, carried by you, will pass through so many towns of Latium and Umbria, finally reaching Norcia, where it will remain lit for the whole time of the celebrations in honour of the two Saints born in that place.

Lighting and blessing this meaningful torch, I formulate the wish that, in every town and village through which it passes, it will bring forth sentiments of brotherhood, friendship and peace. Of these, St Benedict was the indefatigable apostle in the midst of the peoples of Europe, who saw him engaged in evangelical action for a Christian awakening under the sign of the Cross and the plough and the emblematic motto "Ora et labora".

In the bright light of this torch may all those whom you meet along the ways of your caravan feel that they are brothers, and settle the reasons for the disagreements and conflicts which make men enemies, and may they become capable of mutual forgiveness, respect, harmony and collaboration! May yours really be the torch of light and peace, in a moment in which egoism and

violence as has been mentioned make us realize more than ever the need of growing awareness of these inestimable Christian and social values.

And to you, dear young athletes who bear, with a pride that is both religious and sporting, this Benedictine torch, I cannot but address a special thought of satisfaction at the generosity with which you carry on and honour the Christian tradition of your land, and put it into practice even in the unusual and important field of sport, no less than in that of Christian virtues. The latter are described in a masterly way by St Benedict when, in Chapter IV of his Rule, he urges the monk and therefore every Christian "not to be proud, violent, a big eater, half-asleep, a sluggard, a grumbler, a detractor, but chaste, meek, zealous, humble and obedient". Try to know a little better, and a little more, the roots from which there comes such a fine way of living and bearing witness to one's religious faith. Continue along this track clearly laid down by the Saint from your region and make the contribution of your person and your work.

This is the wish I form for you with all my heart, praying for you and with you to your and my St Benedict, that he may always protect you with his powerful intercession. I strengthen these wishes with the Apostolic Blessing, which I willingly impart to you all and to your families.

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