



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO CARDINAL RATZINGER
AND TO THE PILGRIMS FROM BAVARIA**

Saturday, 20 April 2002

*Dear Cardinal Ratzinger,
Brothers in the Episcopate,
Madam Minister,
Colleagues of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith,
Members of Cardinal Ratzinger's Doctoral Circle, Alpine Riflemen from Bavaria,
Brothers and Sisters,*

1. My warmest greeting to you all! My esteemed Brothers in the Episcopate and close collaborators, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger's several anniversaries gave you the occasion for your pilgrimage to Rome, to the place of the Successor of Peter. The Cardinal completed his 75th year a few days ago; at this time he looks back with gratitude to his having been chosen Archbishop of München und Freising and to his having been ordained a bishop 25 years ago. I am delighted to welcome all of you who have come from Bavaria and other regions to the Apostolic Palace. May the joyful celebrations of the liturgy and other celebrations of the visit be for you an unforgettable "feast of faith"!

2. You are faithful to the Apostle's words: "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God ... and imitate their faith" (cf. Heb 13,7). Indeed, the reason you honour our esteemed Cardinal Ratzinger is not only his personality, but above all his priestly and episcopal service, which the Jubilarian fulfilled first in Germany, and especially, in his native Bavaria, and, since 1981, here in Rome where he has shown tireless dedication to the truth that leads God's children to true freedom (cf. Jn 8,32).

3. Named Archbishop of München und Freising by my venerable Predecessor Pope Paul VI in

1977 and created Cardinal the same year, Joseph Ratzinger developed his theological mission in a deeper and broader direction in accord with his serious responsibility as Bishop. In fact, he performed the salvific service entrusted to the Bishop during his long period as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, President of the Pontifical Biblical Commission and the International Theological Commission, and member of other Congregations of the Holy See.

Among the many documents of Church teaching to whose redaction Cardinal Ratzinger made a significant contribution, there is above all the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* whose preparation from 1986 to 1992 was entrusted to an *ad hoc* commission that worked under his guidance. In addition to his responsibility with its many challenges, in numerous conferences and publications, the Cardinal succeeded in giving witness to the powerful radiation of the Catholic faith in all its depth and beauty.

4. Dear brothers and sisters, Cardinal Ratzinger received as his mission in life that of being a "collaborator of the truth", after the model of many wonderful pastors of Christ's holy Church. By his example, may he spur you to discover the service to the truth, who is God himself, with a joyful faith and perseverance in the variety of situations in which you live. I warmly thank our Jubilarian for his work and I ask God to grant his gracious guidance, so that he can continue his service in the Church. I hope that all of you who have come here to celebrate his Jubilees, may be enriched by the experience of a faith that brings happiness, and may give generous witness to Christ who said of himself: "I am the way, the truth and the life" (Jn 14,6). To that end I cordially impart to you and to your loved ones in your homeland my Apostolic Blessing.