



The Holy See

*ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE "CIRCOLO SAN PIETRO"*

Friday, 28 February 2003

Dear Members of the "Circolo San Pietro",

1. I am pleased to welcome you this year and greet you with affection. I address a special thought to your beloved and venerable ecclesiastical assistant, Archbishop Ettore Cunial, who is celebrating the 50th anniversary of his episcopal ordination this year. I greet your General President, Dr Marcello Sacchetti, and I thank him for his courteous words on behalf of everyone present.

This is a fine opportunity for me to thank you for the service you offer with perseverance and devotion during the liturgical celebrations in the Vatican Basilica and on other occasions. I am also pleased with the apostolic zeal with which you cooperate in the work of the new evangelization in the Diocese of Rome and for your projects of solidarity for the poor, the sick and the needy with which you witness to the Gospel of charity.

2. You have one task to which you are especially attached: the collection of Peter's Pence in Rome. Today, in accord with the tradition, you have come to present it to me in person. Thank you, dear friends for your participation in the Pope's mission.

You are aware of the growing needs of the apostolate, the requirements of the ecclesial communities, especially in mission countries, and the requests for aid that come from peoples, individuals and families in precarious conditions. Many expect the Apostolic See to give them the support they often fail to find elsewhere.

In this perspective the Peter's Pence Collection is a true and proper participation in the work of evangelization, especially if one considers the meaning and importance of concretely sharing in

the concerns of the universal Church. In this regard, Rome enjoys an unusual role because, with the presence of the Successor of Peter, it is the centre and, in a certain way, the heart of the entire People of God.

May the Lord reward you and grant you the joy of serving him faithfully, working for the growth and expansion of his Kingdom.

3. Dear brothers and sisters, to be faithful to one's dedication, every Christian must carefully foster and intensify his/her relationship with Christ. Strive to be authentic disciples of Christ. Be faithful to your threefold commitment of prayer, action and sacrifice. Offer to those you meet, especially people in difficulty and those on the fringe of society, the spiritual food of the Gospel message as well as material support.

May the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, and the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, protect you and intercede for you. I assure you of my daily remembrance in prayer, while I warmly bless you together with your families and all your loved ones.