



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
TO BISHOP EGIDIO CAPORELLO OF MANTUA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 12TH CENTENARY
OF THE DIOCESE OF MANTUA**

*To my Venerable Brother
Bishop Egidio Caporello of Mantua*

1. I am pleased that the Christian Community is intending to commemorate the 12th centenary (804-2004) of the Diocese with a special Jubilee this year. On this happy occasion, I would like to extend my cordial greeting to you, venerable Brother, and to all those whom divine Providence has entrusted to your pastoral care.

The visit 1,200 years ago to Mantua of my venerable Predecessor St Leo III to venerate the "relic" of the Most Precious Blood of Christ and to raise the city to the rank of an episcopal see, gave rise to an uninterrupted stream of the faithful to venerate this important "relic", which refers to the mystery of the Redemption and the gift of the sacrament of the Eucharist.

I gladly join you and the whole Diocese in raising a hymn of praise and thanksgiving for the many fruits of good that have ripened down the centuries. Furthermore, I hope that the various Jubilee events will trigger a renewed commitment of loyalty to Christ through a deeper knowledge of the reasons for faith and a reinforcement of the sense of belonging to the Church. This will not fail to encourage priests, Religious and the faithful to be ever more enthusiastic in their Gospel proclamation and witness.

2. The Jubilee Year of the Diocese that began on 30 November 2003, the First Sunday of Advent, will end next 21 November, the Solemnity of Christ, the Universal King. Its main purpose is to awaken and intensify in all the members of the diocesan Community the memory of the death and Resurrection of Christ, a mystery that is made ceaselessly present in the Eucharist.

This Church of Mantua, therefore, has rightly placed at the heart of the Jubilee celebrations Christ, concealed beneath the veil of the Eucharistic species. Drawing inspiration from the splendid Gospel passage of the multiplication of the loaves (cf. Lk 9: 10-17) which contains a prophetic announcement of the wonderful miracle of the Eucharist, the living gift of the Body and Blood of Christ, the Church wishes to stimulate in every believer a generous missionary attitude. Listening to Jesus' words: "*you give them something to eat*" (Lk 9: 13), each person must feel called by the Lord, like the Twelve, to a responsible service of love for others, and especially for the poor and needy.

Venerable Brother and dear faithful of Mantua, daily participation in the Eucharist, the food of eternal life, can transform the lives of believers. Nourished by this bread of salvation, they can grow like a Church which "gives life", for the Lord will enable them to work the miracles that the Son worked and, with the power of the Holy Spirit, constantly renews in his people.

3. Dear friends, the Eucharist imbues you with the courage and joy to be holy. This Jubilee period is therefore a favourable opportunity to deepen the universal vocation to holiness. The world needs holy people before and more than everything else.

The 1,200 years of the Diocese's history record the presence of outstanding figures that continue to shine with the radiance of their unreserved attachment to Christ. The Liturgy presents them once again for the imitation and devotion of believers. I recall, in the first place, St Anselmo da Baggio, the principal Patron of the Diocese, "a luminous reflection of the holiness of God and of his Son, Jesus Christ", as I described him on the ninth centenary of his death (cf. *Insegnamenti* IX/I [1986], 228).

My thoughts then turn to St Aloysius Gonzaga, Co-Patron of the Diocese, whom I had the opportunity to honour in Castiglione delle Stiviere, his birthplace, on the occasion of the fourth centenary of his death. Still today, this ardent young man, follower of Christ, addresses a pressing exhortation to us of coherence and fidelity to the Gospel, reminding us that God must have priority in our lives.

I am also thinking of my venerable Predecessor, St Pius X, who spent several years of his fruitful episcopal ministry in Mantua, a zealous and loving Pastor, whose memory lives on.

Following in the footsteps of so many Saints and Blesseds, may the Christians of Mantua proceed in their journey of faith, every day building up their attachment to Christ and reinforcing the bonds of a fraternal union, strengthened by their unshakable fidelity to the Gospel.

4. Like the rest of Italy, Mantua has known rapid social changes in recent years and many financial difficulties, while it is confronting a growing number of different cultures and religions. A certain consumeristic and secularized mindset is undermining the unity and stability of families and, by

attracting more and more Christians, causes them de facto to contribute to a progressive detachment from the values of the faith in social, civil and political milieus. It is vital to respond to these erosive forces and hence indispensable to rediscover the Christian roots of one's own culture.

All the faithful are called into question by this commitment. They will make an effective contribution to this urgent task if they know how to put Christ at the centre of every personal, family and community project. It is by starting afresh from him that it becomes possible to build a more just and fraternal world.

5. Beloved Diocese of Mantua, do not despair at the difficulties you meet! I repeat to you too, "*Duc in altum!*" [put out into the deep]. The Spirit of the Risen One will not fail to sustain and strengthen you; he will impel you to look beyond your limitations and discover with grateful wonder the miracle of Bread that is always more than plentiful. Supported by the example and prayer of your Holy Patrons, walk with confidence on the paths of the new millennium!

Faithful of the beloved Church of Mantua, I entrust you to the motherly protection of the Crowned Virgin, Queen and Mother of Divine Grace, particularly venerated in your region. May she guide you and support you always.

With these sentiments and hopes, I send to you, venerable Brother, to the clergy, the Religious and the entire diocesan Community a special Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 10 June 2004, Solemnity of Corpus Christi

JOHN PAUL II