

# Draw Close Your Spiritual Ties

Following are excerpts from exhortations given by Pope John Paul II to various groups in the course of an extraordinary general audience, April 26.

## To pilgrims from the Diocese of Crema:

It is true, many things change, not only as regards civil and social progress, but also at the level of ecclesial morals. However, as I said recently at Turin, Christ is always present, and he is enough for every age! We read in fact, in the Letter to the Hebrews, that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." It is he who founds and strengthens our mutual communion: not only among us, the living, but also above time, with all those who have preceded us in the bond of faith. Thus our Christian joy is nourished, and from here, too, begins the impetus for our everyday witness in the light of the Gospel.



If I may make a recommendation, it is that you should draw closer and closer your spiritual ties, both with your worthy bishop, and among yourselves. It is in this way that the Christian faith becomes adult and mature: by means of conscious, responsible and zealous participation in community life, both in the parish and in the diocese.

## To the members of the Association of Italian Volunteer Blood Donors (AVIS):

The act of those who generously give their blood to brothers who need it, goes beyond the purely humanitarian aspect, already so meritorious and praiseworthy in itself, to become at the same time a typically Christian act and, it could be said, an answer to that love of Christ, which asks to be imitated and continued.

At the present time when there is so much talk of violence of every kind, which is the cause of frequent

bloodshed, your generosity, beloved brothers, who are ready to offer part of your blood to save lives or relieve suffering, stands out all the more clearly and almost offsets it.

In this society of progress, which witnesses more and more advanced techniques also in the field of medicine and surgery, and which, owing to increasing and frantic movement with increasingly fast means of transportation, is often struck by news of road accidents, which leave behind them so many victims, the contribution of those who, like yourselves, are ready to donate their blood, becomes more and more urgent and indispensable.

Therefore I willingly take the opportunity of your presence to express once more my praise to all members of AVIS, and to all blood donors, for the good they have done and continue to do and for the help and the good example they give to the community. At the same time I exhort them to persevere in this beneficial work of theirs, which, in addition to being an outstanding social service, is a modern realization of the parable of the Good Samaritan.

I hope therefore that there will be an ever increasing number of those who, not being impeded from doing so, are ready to give a little of their blood to brothers; and that this donation will always be extraneous to the pursuit of personal interests, and animated by genuine Christian charity, in order to preserve always its noble and elevated nature.

## To seminarians:

Great is my joy at seeing you: you are, in fact, the hope of your dioceses and of the whole Church. You have already covered considerable ground on the way to the priesthood: your cultural, theological and spiritual preparation is well underway. Study of the science of God and of his revealed word, which takes place in the context of other important disciplines, must stimulate more and more your commitment to Christ, the eternal Priest, who has chosen you to be heralds of his Gospel message, dispensers of his grace and of his mysteries. To this lofty dignity there must

correspond intense faith, constant prayer, limpidity of thought and morals, generous availability for the expectations of the People of God, and docile submission to the magisterium of your pastors, assisted by the Holy Spirit.

Your ministry will not be an easy one. Like that of Jesus, it must be exercised with deep humility and, above all, with invincible trust in him who said, "You are my friends."

## To participants in the Congress for Life:

Human life is sacred, that is, beyond the reach of any arbitrary power which would wish to attack it, harm it or even suppress it. From the moment of conception to the last instant of its natural survival in time, it is worthy of respect, consideration and effort to safeguard its rights and enhance its quality.

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## Pope John Paul

# Abortion Wrong 'For Any Reason'

Vatican City (RNS) — In one of his clearest, most forceful statements on abortion to date, Pope John Paul II declared "that any willful destruction of human life by procured abortion, for any reason whatsoever, is not in accord with God's commandment."

Addressing a group of Indonesian bishops on their five-year ad limina visit to Rome, the pontiff said he was speaking out on the issue: "so

that all may know the stand of the Catholic Church on the utter inviolability of human life from the moment of conception."

Besides not being "in accord with God's commandment," the pope said that abortion, for whatever reason, was also "entirely outside the competence of any individual or group and that it cannot rebound to true human progress."

Speaking to the bishops on June 7, the pope said that the final word on the matter of birth control lies with Christ, as conveyed to us through Pope Paul VI's encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*.

"God's wisdom supercedes human calculations and his grace is powerful in people's lives," he said. "It is important for us to realize the direct influence of Christ on the members of his body in all realms of moral challenges."



## Priests Retreat

Bishop Matthew H. Clark, flanked by Auxiliary Bishop Dennis W. Hickey on his right, and Father Charles Latus on his left, begins the liturgy last Tuesday during the priests' retreat at Becket Hall. More than 150 diocesan priests, split into two groups, attended the two four-day sessions.

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