



### To the Knights of Columbus

Once again I send warm greetings and good wishes on the occasion of the annual convention of the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus, to be held this year in Chicago. I pray that the meeting will further strengthen your Order in its praiseworthy traditions of Christian fellowship and unswerving commitment to the Church's mission in the world.

As the Third Millennium of the Incarnation draws ever nearer, I invite the Knights of Columbus to take an active part in promoting the Catholic community's spiritual preparation for this significant Jubilee. As I indicated in my Apostolic Letter Tertio Millennio Adveniente, the year 1997 will be devoted to sustained reflection on the mystery of Jesus Christ, the Word of God made man by the power of the Holy Spirit. This first phase of preparation calls upon all believers to enter into a more intimate relationship with the Lord, that they may experience "a true longing for holiness, a deep desire for conversion and personal renewal in a context of ever more intense prayer and of solidarity with our neighbours, especially the most needy" (No. 42).

The Church's celebration of the Third Millennium also aims at awakening in Christians a renewed sense of their duty to bear common witness to the truth of the Gospel and its revelation of the dignity and inestimable value of

every human being. Inspired by their Catholic faith, the Knights of Columbus have been in the forefront of the movement to affirm the sanctity of all human life and to call attention to the urgent need for responsible public debate on important ethical issues which directly affect the future of society. As the reality of the threats against human life, especially the life of the unborn, becomes increasingly evident, I encourage you to continue your efforts to work for a general awakening of consciences at every level of society. These efforts, especially when they are combined with charitable initiatives on behalf of women and children in need, represent a singular affirmation of the "Gospel of Life" which the whole Church is called to proclaim and celebrate.

During the Mass which I celebrated last October in the Diocese of Brooklyn, in the presence of many Knights of Columbus and their families, I emphasized that "the well-being of individuals and communities depends on the healthy state of the family" (Homily at Aqueduct Race Track, October 6, 1995, No. 7). As the domestic church where God is present to his children in love, the Christian family teaches its members to see, in the light of faith, the true meaning of our human vocation, the requirements of a sound and enduring social order and the need for generous cooperation in the service of truth and the building of a society truly worthy of man. I commend your efforts to help families to understand their decisive role in the life of society and in the growth of the civilization of love.

With these sentiments, I express once more my profound gratitude for the ways in which the Knights of Columbus in many parts of the world daily give evidence of their faith in Christ and serve the Church's mission. Invoking upon all of you and your families the loving protection of Mary, Mother of the Church, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of joy and peace in Jesus Christ our Savior.

From the Vatican, July 1, 1996

*Joannes Paulus II*