



### To the Knights of Columbus

I send cordial greetings to the 117th Annual Convention of the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus, gathered in St. Paul-Minneapolis, and I pray that this international meeting will provide renewed inspiration and sound direction as you strive to carry on the praiseworthy traditions of faith and fellowship which have always been your Order's hallmark.

In this final year of the Church's spiritual preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, our gaze is turned to the Father of mercies who invites the whole human family, through his Son and in the power of the Holy Spirit, to draw near to him and to share in the mystery of his eternal love. The Knights have sought to participate ever more consciously in that great "pilgrimage to the house of the Father" which the Church makes daily along the path of prayer and the pursuit of holiness, justice and peace (cf. *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 49). Each of you, in your families, in the workplace, and in the wide variety of social settings in which you interact with others, has a remarkable opportunity to draw others to an experience of the strong and faithful love of our heavenly Father. In a society which urgently needs to rediscover the true face of manhood, the quiet example of men whose lives are shaped by the virtues of faith, integrity, fidelity, hard work and generous concern for others, can be an immensely effective testimony to the

Gospel. I encourage you to reflect seriously on the importance of this particular form of Christian witness, especially to the young who are just setting out upon life's way.

The vast spiritual horizons opened up by the Jubilee Year challenge us to realize that the Church's pilgrimage towards the house of the Father is not only made in the hearts of individual believers but also involves the transformation of society in the light of Christ's teaching. The history of the Knights of Columbus shows how a small group of men inspired by Christian faith and charitable concern were able to inspire a movement of immense fruitfulness for the advance of God's Kingdom on earth. As the Supreme Council gathers on the eve of the Millennium to chart your Order's course for the future, I take this occasion to express once more my gratitude for your generous support of the Church's mission in the world, especially by your defense of the family and of unborn human life, your practical support for Catholic education and your efforts to promote vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life.

In just a few months, the Great Jubilee will begin with the opening of the Holy Door in Saint Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, a symbol of the immense graces flowing from the Heart of the Redeemer and poured out upon the world through the ministry of the Church. May the celebration of the Great Jubilee be for all the Knights a stimulus to deepen their love of the Church and their commitment to

lead others to an experience of the saving mystery of grace which is the very heart of her life and mission in the world.

With these sentiments I commend the members of the Supreme Council and the participants in the Annual Convention to the prayers of Mary, Mother of the Church. To all the Knights and their families I gladly impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of joy and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

From the Vatican, May 21, 1999

*Joannes Paulus II*