

**LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE APOSTOLIC ADMINISTRATOR
FOR LATINS OF THE CAUCASUS
ON THE OCCASION OF THE INAUGURATION
OF THE "REDEMPTOR HOMINIS" OUTPATIENT'S CLINIC**

*To my Revered Brother Giuseppe Pasotto
Apostolic Administrator for Latins of the Caucasus*

1. With this Message on the happy occasion of the inauguration of the *Redemptor Hominis Outpatients' Clinic*, I would like to be spiritually present among those who will be meeting in Tbilisi to celebrate this event. I affectionately greet you first, Revered Brother, and in expressing my appreciation for the dedication and zeal with which you carry out your pastoral ministry, I urge you to persevere with Gospel charity and trusting ecumenical openness in the mission entrusted to you. With you, I greet and thank the priest and religious who assist you with their generous service.

I also extend my cordial and respectful greetings to His Holiness Ilia II, Catholicos Patriarch of the Orthodox Church of Georgia, with whom I would like to exchange the holy kiss of peace, as confirmation of our common commitment to witnessing to God's love and to advancing with courage and faith on the path to full unity among the disciples of the one Lord Jesus Christ. Everyone realizes how urgent and important it is in our time, frequently marked by religious indifference and moral confusion, for believers in Christ to be able to offer a harmonious witness of faith and a meaningful example of honesty and co-operation in service to their brothers and sisters.

2. I would next like to extend a respectful greeting to Mr Eduard Shevardnadze, President of the Republic of Georgia, who in recent years has not failed to inform me of the delicate and complex situation of the Georgian people, who are particularly dear to me, requesting attention, understanding and solidarity on various occasions.

I would like to express a special and affectionate word of greeting to the various delegations that have gone there for the occasion: to that of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, which has promoted the building of this opportune structure; to that of Italian Caritas, which has substantially contributed to funding the work; to that of the Camillian religious, who promptly and willingly agreed to direct and supervise it. The presence of all these persons clearly shows the interest and concern of the entire Catholic Church for this nation's faithful, as well as the esteem and friendship that everyone feels towards the Georgian people who have preserved their Christian faith down the centuries, even at the cost of bloodshed. Georgians have expressed this fidelity in many significant artistic and cultural achievements, an eloquent proof of how the seed of the Gospel message has taken root in their land. Indeed, Christian culture and spirituality have become an essential feature of the Georgian people's identity.

3. I would like the outpatients' clinic which is inaugurated today to be a tangible sign of my closeness and affection for all Georgians. I hope it will be a living expression of the love which believers in Christ are called to show towards the suffering. Christians know that the Lord asks for an attentive service marked with that Gospel style expressed in the face, hands and heart of everyone who, like the Good Samaritan, cares for those who suffer. In this way, every act of active charity becomes a living, comforting expression of divine mercy, which alleviates man's wounds and transforms his pain into spiritual joy and peace.

I therefore trust that whoever comes to this public health facility will be welcomed and will receive professional treatment; in particular may they find respect for the dignity of the person, whoever he may be, since he is created in God's image and likeness. With this Gospel perspective, the indigent sick, orphans and the elderly of the region will be treated free of charge in the outpatients' clinic.

4. I would now like to address a cordial greeting to the young people who on Saturday, 4 April, will gather with you to celebrate World Youth Day. Dear young people, always remember that to grow in faith and Gospel consistency also means maturing in those civil virtues of honesty, uprightness, a sense of justice, the correct use of property, sincerity and competence, which the country especially needs today. Have the courage to follow Jesus in all your decisions! May he alone be the Lord of your life and the true hope of your future. Do not be afraid of problems: the great goals are reached at the cost of many sacrifices and constant perseverance.

Lastly, my thoughts turn to the people of Akalsheni, who on that same day, Saturday, 4 April, will celebrate the joyful moment of the blessing of their new church. I firmly hope that the beautiful, wel-coming building, the result of harmonious co-operation, daily labour and generous dedication, may continually spur all Christians to be themselves the "living stones", according to the words of the Apostle Peter, of that spiritual building of which Christ is the "cornerstone" (cf. 1 Pt 2:4-6).

5. With these sentiments, Revered Brother, I impart the Lord's blessing to you and to each of the persons mentioned: may God, our heavenly Father, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, St Andrew the Apostle, St Nino, St Ketevan and the holy martyrs, monks and doctors of Georgia, grant peace and prosperity to this land blessed by heaven with beautiful landscapes, with fertile soil and with the faith of those who live there!

May the Lord preserve and foster in everyone the hope of a better future and the will to achieve it by generous daily commitment.

From the Vatican, 25 March 1998.

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