



POPE BENEDICT XVI

Welcome speech for the Papal visit to Saint Peter's

St Peter's Vauxhall, London, 18 September 2010

Most Holy Father,

It is with great joy in our hearts that we say "Welcome Holy Father; welcome to Saint Peter's Residence". Our joy is born of gratitude and thanksgiving to God for the immense privilege that is ours today, and so, in the name of Mother General, the Little Sisters of the Poor and Residents here at Saint Peter's and all over the world we assure you of our love, our deep affection and, above all, our prayers.

You have come in the name of Christ and his Church to confirm and strengthen us in our Faith, so it is with eager anticipation that we await the message you are about to address to us.

It is in visiting your elderly brothers and sisters that you bear special witness to the immeasurable love of the Heart of Jesus for some of the most vulnerable and often frail members of today's society. Thank you, Holy Father, for including this visit to older people in your agenda. By doing so, you are underlining the real importance of caring for the elderly in our world of today.

Each elderly person has a vast experience of life, with their own story to tell. Often they have accumulated a great store of wisdom and strength of character and we know that the life of each one is precious in the eyes of God.

We are really happy to assure you, Holy Father, that each day here in St. Peter's and in our Homes throughout the world, our Residents and Sisters pray very specially for your intentions and for the needs of the Church. You will notice that we are very blessed to have our Resident Priests who contribute so much spiritually, not only to our home but also to the life of the church through the joyful and faithful witness they give of their Priesthood.

We recall with great happiness and deep appreciation the Canonisation of our Foundress, Saint Jeanne Jugan, in Rome, on 11th October last year. Her message of love, respect and care of the elderly is more actual than ever in today's society. On that day, Holy Father, when referring to Saint Jeanne Jugan, you greatly encouraged us with these words:

"Her charism is ever timely while so many elderly people are suffering from numerous forms of poverty and solitude... May St. Jeanne Jugan be for elderly people a living source of hope."

May we, her daughters, always cherish her charism and follow, with a spirit of love and generosity, in her footsteps. Thank you Holy Father for showing us your loving concern for the elderly. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for being here with us today. Your Visit will always remain a source of immense joy and something we shall treasure for the rest of our lives!