

In Memory of Don Siro:

Message sent by Don Siro on the occasion of the feast of the Immaculate Conception of September 8, 2003

Translated from the Italian by Benjamin De Maio Montalbano

My Dear Friends,

I want to thank Don Maurizio for being so kind as to allow me to send you a greeting at what is now the end of the day dedicated to the Madonna, — "Our Madonna," the Madonna of Calitri — whom we venerate as our Mother in one of the most meaningful celebrations in the life of our Christian Community. You know how much I wanted to be with all of you at this time. If I am not there in body at least I am with you in The Holy Spirit, and I am convinced that, in the Lord, such presence is real. Rather, perhaps, it is even more real, because such a presence is experienced in Him who "Can do everything" for our good. Among the many feelings that have been aroused in my heart in this somewhat trying time, I think it important to share two of them with you: First of all, I wish to greet and embrace each and every one of you, specifically because — and this can appear predictable and repetitive, and so it is — I miss you very much. Moreover, it is a greeting meant for everybody. First of all for the families, especially those families who are having a difficult time or are in crisis. Then for the young people, the boys and girls and among these the preadolescents, who will soon receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. I want to state once again to everybody, "God exists!" and this changes and must change to meaning of the things we experience because if He exists—and He *does* exist — none of us who believe in Him have the right to be sad.

Then, I would also very much like to thank you for all I received in the short time Providence has given me to share with Calitri. During these months, — permit me this slight liberty — I often heard a song now somewhat dated. The song—among other things — has a phrase that I

softly sing to myself almost daily and it says: "If I return to all the places in my heart, how many times could I say to someone who has given me a bit of



Don Siro Colombo

himself: "You are part of me!" and you have given me not a little, but a lot. Thanks be to the Lord and to you for all this. Finally, I do not know when and if Providence will allow me to return. I hope He will and I hope it very much, at least for me. However, I believe some time must pass. . . . In any case, I ask you to pray to Our Lady to intercede with her Son. A prayer asking not so much that I recuperate and heal possibly quickly, but a prayer that today and until God so wills it, both you and I learn the will of the Father about each of us, while meekly finding — in listening to His word and in the comfort of the Eucharist — the strength to put His Word into practice. Then, however well it

goes with Him, it also goes well with us. And before praying for the blessing of the Lord through the intercession of Mary, I would like to "steal"

Don Maurizio's job, whom I again affectionately greet and thank. I don't know why, but you will remember that I have never been very good thanking people, and who knows if I can manage to do it a little better from a distance. . . . I thank the Mayor and all his co-workers, who with exemplary punctuality participate in this moment representing the entire village. I thank the Maresciallo and police, Signor Priore, the administration, and all the Brothers of the Immaculate Conception. I thank the President and all of Catholic Action, the Municipal Police and all the persons who in various ways have contributed to the success of the celebrations. I thank the Sisters to whom I direct a special greeting. I thank the priests present (I am certain don Lorenzo is there and I embrace him); our seminarian Giuseppe whom we entrust in a special way to Mary, and a very special thank you to the president and to the members of the

Committee who certainly merit applause. Please excuse me if I have forgotten anyone this time. Seriously, however, before receiving the blessing, I ask forgiveness of all those whom, with my words and my behavior, I have not always known how to help to discover God in our lives. Help us this evening to do it with the Lady who has given him to us in permitting that the Word be made flesh and dwell among us as a true man like us. And in giving you ideally a kiss in the Lord, I also ask a prayer of you, and I sincerely say to you "Arrivederci" — Until we see each other again. May God bless you and me tonight and always.

Your parish priest - don Siro