

Message of John Paul II to Bishop Lucien Fruchaud of Saint-Brieuc and Tréguier for the 700th Anniversary of the Birth of St. Ivo Hélyory Of Brittany

(13 V 2003 r.)

To Bishop Lucien Fruchaud of Saint-Brieuc and Tréguier

1. On 19 May 2003, the Diocese of Saint-Brieuc and Tréguier celebrates the seventh centenary of the *dies natalis* of Ivo Hélyory of Kermartin, a son of Brittany. On the occasion of this event which fits into the context of a year dedicated to St Ivo, I join you in prayer, together with everyone who has gathered for the festivities and all the members of your diocese. I remember with emotion my visit to Brittany in 1996, to Sainte-Anne d'Auray. I appreciate the welcome and support which the local Authorities have given to the various religious events; I am grateful on this occasion to the bar of Saint-Brieuc for having organized a series of reflections on juridical matters. This witnesses to the great interest of civil society in a figure who was able to combine a social role and an ecclesial mission, drawing from his spiritual life the strength for action and for the unification of his being.

2. On 19 May 1347, Pope Clement VI raised Ivo Hélyory to the glory of the altars. The testimony of the small rural community, collected during the cause for his canonization, is certainly the most beautiful tribute that can be paid to someone who devoted his whole life to serving Christ in serving the poor, as a magistrate, lawyer and priest. St Ivo was involved in defending the principles of justice and equity. He was careful to guarantee the fundamental rights of the person, respect for his primary and transcendent dignity, and the protection that the law must guarantee him. For all who exercise a legal profession, whose patron saint he is, he remains the voice of justice, which is ordained to reconciliation and peace in order to create new relations among individuals and communities and build a more impartial society. I give thanks for the shining example he offers to Christians today, and on a broader scale, to all people of good will, inviting them to walk on paths of justice, of respect for the law and of solidarity with the poor, to serve the truth and to take part in "a new 'creativity' in charity" ([*Novo Millennio Ineunte*](#), n. 50).

3. St Ivo also chose to divest himself of everything, little by little, to be more radically conformed to Christ, desiring to follow him in poverty, to contemplate the face of the Lord in the faces of the lowly with whom he tried to identify (cf. Mt 25). As a servant of God's Word, he meditated upon it, to help all those in search of the living water to discover its treasures (cf. Is 41:

17). He tirelessly travelled through the countryside to bring material and spiritual help to the poor, calling his contemporaries to bear witness to Christ the Saviour through a daily life of holiness. It is an outlook such as this that enables "the proclamation of Christ to reach people, mould communities, and have a deep and incisive influence in bringing Gospel values to bear in society and culture" ([*Novo Millennio Ineunte*](#), n. 29).

4. The values proposed by St Ivo retain an astonishing timeliness. His concern to promote impartial justice and to defend the rights of the poorest persons invites the builders of Europe today to make every effort to ensure that the rights of all, especially the weakest, are recognized and defended.

The Europe of human rights must ensure that the objective elements of natural law remain the basis of positive laws. In fact, St Ivo based his duty as judge on the principles of natural law, which every conscience that is formed, enlightened and attentive can discover through reason (cf. St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 91, a.1-2), and on positive law, which finds in natural law its fundamental principles, thanks to which it is possible to compile equitable juridical norms and to prevent them from being purely arbitrary or a mere act of government. By his way of administering justice, St Ivo also reminds us that law is established for the good of persons and peoples, and that its principal function is to safeguard the inalienable dignity of the individual in all the stages of his life, from conception to natural death. This holy Breton likewise took care to defend the family, its members and its property, showing that law plays an important role in social relations and that couples and families are essential to society and its future.

The figure and life of St Ivo can thus help our contemporaries to understand the positive and humanizing value of natural rights. "An authentic conception of natural law, understood as the protection of the illustrious and inalienable dignity of every human being, is the guarantee of equality and gives real substance to [the] "rights of man" ([*Address to the Participants in the Eighth General Assembly of the Pontifical Academy for Life*](#), 27 February 2002, n. 6; *ORE*, 13 March 2002, p. 5). For this, it is necessary to persevere in academic research to find the roots, anthropological meaning and ethical content of the natural right and the natural law, in the philosophical perspective of the great thinkers of history such as Aristotle and St Thomas Aquinas.

Consequently, it behoves lawyers, all law-makers, legal historians and legislators themselves always to have, as St Leo the Great asked of them, a deep "love of justice" (*Sermon on the Passion*, 59), and to try always to base their reflections and practice on the anthropological and moral principles which put man at the centre of the elaboration of laws and of legal practice.

This will show that all the branches of law are an eminent service to individuals and society. In this spirit, I rejoice that jurists have been able to make the most of the anniversary of St Ivo to organize two consecutive colloquiums, on the life and influence of their holy patron and on the deontology of European attorneys, thereby showing their attachment to epistemological and hermeneutical research in juridical science and practice.

5. "*N'an neus ket en Breiz, n'an neus ket unan, n'an neus ket eur Zant evel Zan Erwan*": "There is not in all Brittany, there is not a single one, there is no saint like St Ivo". These words from the canticle to St Ivo express the full fervour and veneration with which the crowds of pilgrims, with their Bishops and priests but also all the magistrates, lawyers and jurists, continue today to honour the one whom popular piety has nicknamed "the father of the poor". May St Ivo help them to fulfil their aspirations to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with their God (cf. Mi 6: 8)!

6. In this month of Mary, I entrust you, Monsignor, to the intercession of Our Lady of the Rosary. I ask God to sustain priests so that they may be holy and just witnesses of the Lord's mercy, and help their brethren discover the joy to be found in leading a personal and professional life in moral rectitude. I also pray to St Ivo to sustain the faith of the faithful, especially of the young people, so that they will not be afraid to respond generously to the call of Christ to follow him in the priestly or the religious life, happy to be servants of God and of their brothers and sisters. I encourage the seminarians and the team of formators of the Major Seminary of Saint-Yves at Rennes to pray to their holy patron with confidence, especially in this period of preparation for ordination to the diaconate and to the priesthood. Lastly, I entrust to the Lord all those who have a legal or judicial responsibility in society, so that they may always carry out their mission in a perspective of service.

I impart an affectionate Apostolic Blessing to you, as well as to Cardinal Mario Francesco Pompedda, my special Envoy, and to all the Bishops present, the priests, the deacons, the men and women religious, the people taking part in the historical and juridical Colloquiums, the various Authorities present and all the faithful who have gathered in Tréguier on the occasion of this commemoration.

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http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/2003/may/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20030519_bishop-fruchaud_en.html