

Embraces and emotion in the square

Pubblicato: Lunedì 17 Ottobre 2011



"I see that the church extends outside the basilica." At 7.20 pm, Cardinal Angelo Scola was met by the first round of applause: he had just finished the religious ceremony, which had brought him to Varese for the first time.

During the mass, **a large number of people stopped in front of the doors of the basilica**, which were wide open, and festively decorated. **A maxi screen (see photo, left) on the left of the entrance enabled thousands of people, including passers-by, to watch the ceremony, even for just a moment.** Cardinal Scola was happily surprised. "I'm consoled by the large attendance at evening prayers, on a week day," he said during the sermon.

In addition to the hundreds of people who attended the whole ceremony, and who were able to take part in the Sacrament of the Eucharist in the courtyard of the church, there were also thousands of people, of all ages, who, even for just a moment, stopped for a prayer, or to sing a quiet hymn passage, before continuing on their way home.

But in the end, the Cardinal rewarded those who remained. After crossing the nave of the church, which was full of worshipers who had stayed back to shake his hand, Angelo Scola came out of the Basilica and greeted the crowd behind the barrier, following the whole semicircle, from left to right. **Mothers with babies, the elderly and the young were all able to approach him**, even to exchange a few quick words. Scola was surprised by how many people greeted him, and responded to their "Eminence, please pray for us," with "Thank you, please pray for me too". He then went to the rectory to prepare for the meeting with the parishes in the evening.

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