

Dear Children and Youngsters

I have been asked to write a few thoughts to introduce this book so I wish to start by thanking the editor and you, great readers. This is not just a formal thank you; let me explain why. You should know that my life as Mayor is very busy, I never have any free time, I rush madly from one meeting to the next, I must study many difficult things, meet many people and I have to read many books, some of them boring, in order to present them. Well this time, thanks to Babalibri and to you, I really enjoyed myself.

The book you are now holding in your hands is a pleasant and intelligent book that tells about a beautiful and magical city. You will discover this for yourselves as you flip through its pages, and I advise you to read it carefully, just as I did before writing to you. And although I know this city well and I often visit its different areas to meet with people in the places where they live, I was amazed to find many things I didn't know about. How many surprises may we discover by wandering through the streets of Milan! Even those places that we have always had in front of our eyes – buildings, monuments, gardens, houses – conceal secrets that are revealed in these pages, making us appreciate even more that which surrounds us. This guide is therefore indispensable not only to those of you who will come to pay us visit during these months, but also to those who live in Milan every day.

I am in love with our Milan and reading these pages I understand why. Milan is so fascinating to me because it is a discreet city; it doesn't dazzle with its beauty, but bids us to discover it. It's as if it challenged us to dig deeper, to look behind the facades, to peek into its corners. This guide accompanies us along a journey that helps us to know the history and roots that have made the city strong and flourishing. The name Milano derives from Mediolanum, 'the city in the middle'. In the middle of the Padan Plain, in between two rivers, but also a city "in between", in which the cultures of the different historical eras, from Roman times through the Middle Ages, to the Nineteenth century and finally to our own times, have left signs that are visible to us all; a city that has always been open, rich and generous.

So read this book carefully and then ask your parents or your teachers to visit the places suggested in these pages with you. It will be like living an enchanted story. It will seem like crossing a doorway in time and retracing the life of the city through the thousands of adventures that have helped make it. Milan awaits you to offer all that you haven't yet seen.

*The Mayor of Milan
Giuliano Pisapia*