



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
FOR THE WAY OF THE CROSS
AT REBIBBIA DISTRICT PRISON IN ROME**

Dear Friends,

I was glad to know that, in preparation for Easter, you are organizing, here in the Rebibbia District Prison, a Way of Cross at which my Vicar for Rome, Cardinal Agostino Vallini, will preside with the participation of detainees, penitentiary workers and groups of faithful from various parishes in the city. I feel particularly close to this initiative because the memory of my [Visit to Rebibbia's prison](#) just before Christmas is ever alive in my heart; I remember the faces that I met and the words that I heard that made a profound impression on me. Thus, in spirit I join in your prayer, and like this I can continue to be present among you, and for this I thank your Chaplains in particular.

I know that this Way of the Cross is also meant to be a sign of reconciliation. Indeed, as one of the detainees said during our meeting, imprisonment serves to enable one to rise again after having fallen, to reconcile with oneself, with others and with God, so as to be able to re-enter society. When, in the Way of the Cross, we see Jesus who falls to the ground — one, two, three times — we understand that he shares our human condition, the weight of our sins caused him to fall; but three times Jesus rose again and continued on the road to Calvary; and like this, with his help, we too can rise again after falling, and perhaps help another, a brother, to rise again.

But what gave Jesus the strength to go forward? It was his certainty that the Father was with him. Even though in his heart there was the bitter sense of abandonment, Jesus knew that the Father loved him, and it was precisely this immense love, the Heavenly Father's infinite mercy that consoled him. It was greater than the violence and contempt that surrounded him. Even though everyone despised him and no longer treated him like a man, Jesus, in his heart, had the firm assurance of being forever a son, the Son loved by God the Father.

This, dear friends, is the great gift that Jesus made us with his Way of the Cross: he revealed to us

that God is infinite love, he is mercy, and he carries the weight of our sins to the end, so that we can rise again and be reconciled and find peace. Let us, too, then, not be afraid to make our “way of the cross”, to carry our cross together with Jesus. He is with us. And Mary, too, is with us, his and our Mother. She remains faithful also at the foot of our Cross, and prays for our resurrection because she firmly believes that, even on the darkest night, the last word is the light of the love of God.

With this hope, founded on faith, I wish that all of you live this coming Easter in the peace and joy that Christ won for us with his blood, and with deep affection I impart my Apostolic Blessing, cordially extending it to your families and loved ones.

From the Vatican, 22 March 2012

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI