



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO MEMBERS OF THE REGIONAL BOARD OF LAZIO,
THE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION OF ROME
AND THE PROVINCE OF ROME***

Clementine Hall

Thursday, 11 January 2007

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is the second time I have the pleasure of receiving you at the beginning of the year for the traditional exchange of greetings. I am grateful to you for coming here and offer my cordial and respectful greetings to Hon. Mr Pietro Marrazzo, President of the Regional Board of Lazio, to Hon. Mr Walter Veltroni, Mayor of Rome, and to Hon. Mr Enrico Gasbarra, President of the Province of Rome. I sincerely thank them for their kind words, also on behalf of the Boards they head. With them, I greet the Presidents of the respective Council Assemblies and all of you who are gathered here.

Our meeting is a favourable opportunity for strengthening and consolidating those deep, ancient and tenacious bonds that unite the Successor of Peter with this City, unique in the world, with its Province and with the entire Lazio Region.

Through you, I express my affection, closeness and pastoral concern to each one of the citizens and inhabitants of Rome and of Lazio and its cities, towns and suburbs; a land in which Christianity has put down particularly visible roots down the centuries and produced works of beauty and fruits of good, demonstrating in practice how true a friend of men and women God made man actually is.

This legacy of goodness and beauty is now in a certain sense also entrusted to you as public administrators, with full respect for the healthy secularity of your functions. Moreover, this is a

natural context for collaboration between the Church and the civil society you represent. The integral human good of the populations of Rome and Lazio are certainly protected and increased by this cooperation.

In this spirit, I would like to draw your attention to certain matters of common interest and great importance and timeliness. To do so, I draw inspiration from a very recent experience that brought me deep joy: my [Visit last week to the Soup Kitchen of the Diocesan Caritas of Rome on the Colle Oppio](#).

On that occasion, in naming the Soup Kitchen after my unforgettable Predecessor, John Paul II, I repeated the words he spoke in the very same place 15 years ago: "Suffering man belongs to us". Yes, dear Representatives of the Administrative Boards of Rome and of Lazio, every suffering person belongs to the Church and at the same time to all the brethren in humanity. Thus, the suffering belong also and in a special way to your responsibility as public administrators.

I cannot but rejoice, therefore, in the collaboration that has existed for quite some time between the ecclesial bodies and your Administrations for the purpose of alleviating and going to the help of the many forms of poverty, financial and also human and relational, which afflict a considerable number of people and families, especially among immigrants.

There is then the immense field of health care that requires an enormous, coordinated effort to guarantee people suffering from physical or psychological illnesses prompt and appropriate treatment: also in this area, the Church and Catholic organizations are pleased to offer their collaboration, in the light of the great principles of the sacredness of human life from conception to its natural end, and of the centrality of the sick person. I trust in your readiness to encourage this collaboration, which will undoubtedly benefit the entire population.

This same concern for the human being that impels us to be close to the poor and the sick makes us attentive to that fundamental human good of the family based on marriage. Today, the intrinsic value and authentic motivations of marriage and the family need to be understood better. To this end, the Church's pastoral commitment has been considerable and must increase further.

But a twofold policy of and for the family, which calls into question the responsibility of its members, is also necessary. In other words, it is a matter of increasing initiatives that can make the forming of a family and subsequently having and raising children easier and less burdensome for young couples; that encourage the employment of youth, contain housing costs as much as possible and increase the number of kindergartens and nursery schools.

Indeed, those projects that aim to attribute to other forms of union inappropriate legal recognition, inevitably lead to weakening and destabilizing the legitimate family founded on marriage and appear to be dangerous and counterproductive.

Educating the new generations is the pastoral priority on which the Diocese of Rome is currently focusing attention. The social and civil importance of this problem certainly escapes none of you. Therefore, while I am grateful for the support you already offer to certain forms of the Church's educational commitment, including the after-school recreation facilities, I am confident that in this area too it will be possible to develop a fruitful collaboration with respect for the temperament and tasks proper to each one of those concerned.

Distinguished Authorities, there are many other problems, often very complex, that you must face every day in order to foster the financial, social and cultural development of Rome and Lazio. I consequently assure you of my closeness and my prayers for you and for the lofty responsibilities you are called to exercise. May the Lord guide your steps and illumine your decisions.

With these sentiments, I warmly impart to each one of you my Apostolic Blessing, which I willingly extend to your families and to all who live and work in Rome, in its Province and throughout Lazio.

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