



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE 31st SQUADRON
OF THE ITALIAN AIR FORCE***

Saturday, 10 September 2005

Dear Members of the 31st Squadron of the Italian Air Force,

Our meeting today is my first opportunity to meet your whole group. I am truly delighted and thank you for your visit as well as for your service. I also cordially greet your relatives who have accompanied you.

I am grateful to the outgoing Commander, Colonel Giuseppe Coco, for his courteous words, and I would like to express to him my warm gratitude for the appreciated work he has done.

I greet Colonel Giuseppe Gimondo, who is preparing to take over the command of the Squadron, and offer him my very best wishes for his new assignment. I am also grateful for the courteous tribute of an interesting picture.

Since the Lord called me to carry out my ministry as Bishop of Rome, I have already been able to benefit from many of your services and have become aware of the professionalism with which you work, and at the same time, of the Christian spirit that motivates you.

As believers, you are given the possibility of sharing in the same Gospel ideals that are at the root of the Pope's mission. In carrying out your work, you put your competence, experience and acquired skills at the service of the Church, thereby cooperating in your own way with the ministry of the Successor of Peter.

I would like to express my gratitude and also that of my collaborators by awarding to you certain signs of distinction that I have the joy of investing you with on this occasion.

Above all, however, I would like to assure you that I am close to you with prayer, and I entrust to God all your intentions and projects.

My meeting today with you and your loved ones prompts me to remember the families of each one of you to the Lord, so that he will illumine with his grace both favourable and difficult moments and enrich them all with supernatural value.

From this moment, I entrust this intention and all the special intentions you carry in your hearts to the Virgin Mary. I hope your work will be peaceful.

I cordially impart my Blessing to all of you who are present here, and gladly extend it to those who are dear to you and were unable to be with you on this occasion.

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