



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
ON THE OCCASION OF THE CEREMONY CONFERRING
HONORARY CITIZENSHIP ON HIM IN BRESSANONE***

Internal courtyard of the Major Seminary of Bressanone
Saturday, 9 August 2008

*Your Excellency,
Mr President of the Region,
Mr Mayor,
Municipal Councillors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

The honour the municipality of Bressanone has paid to me with the conferral of honorary citizenship is a great joy that I accept with deep gratitude and that will henceforth accompany me in the future epochs of my life. Thanks to this act I am now at home in Bressanone not only - so to speak - with my heart but also in a certain way also legally: I am one of its citizens. Even when I cannot actually come here I will be, however, legally present. I do not think I need to tell you how often I am here in my heart. A big and cordial "thank you"! And I also warmly thank you, who have confirmed and brought to life your beautiful words on Bressanone and on music.

When in the past I would come to Bressanone from the North, through the Brenner Pass, I remember it was always an emotional moment when the valley unfolded before my eyes and the towers of Bressanone appeared, this city surrounded by vineyards and orchards, gently nestling among the mountains and so full of history and beauty. I knew then: one feels good being here. I knew then that I had chosen the right corner and would be able to return to my tasks later with new energy.

As has already been said, I wrote a great many of my books here at Bressanone, I have relaxed here, I have made friends; above all, in Bressanone I have received memories that I shall be taking with me and this is the beauty of it: that I can stroll in the countryside of my memories and,

once I have returned to Rome, my walks through the scenery of memories will repeatedly take me to Bressanone, and I shall be here once again and once again be able to relax and recover my strength.

Bressanone has also acquired a special importance for me because - as you, Mr Mayor have already said in such beautiful and profound words - it is a place of encounter, of an encounter between cultures: indeed, in three languages - Italian, German, and Ladin - cultures meet one another and the intercultural meeting, of which we are in such great need today, has its own history in Bressanone. We know that this encounter is not always easy but is always fruitful and full of gifts; we know that it helps us all, enriches us all and makes us more open and more human.

For me, Bressanone is a place of encounters: an encounter of cultures; also an encounter of a healthy secularism with a joyful Catholic faith; an encounter of a great history with the present and the future. And we see that this history, which is really present and tangible here, does not hinder formation, dynamism or the vitality of the present or the future but, on the contrary, inspires and dynamizes them. And then it is also an encounter of Christian roots and modern spirit which only together can build a society that is really worthy of this name, a really human society.

I think that in this sense, Bressanone is also a European model, a truly European city: the Christian roots, the identity, the Christian identity of our culture is present; it does not close us in on ourselves - far from it, it opens us to others, it gives us the communion of an encounter as well as criteria and values to live by.

My cordial thanks to you all and I ask God's Blessing for you in particular. May the Lord continue to protect this beautiful town and help it build a great and beautiful and human future. Thank you again!

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