



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE ADMINISTRATORS OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF ROME,
THE PROVINCE OF ROME AND THE REGION OF LAZIO
FOR THE TRADITIONAL EXCHANGE OF NEW YEAR GREETINGS***

Clementine Hall

Friday, 14 January 2011

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Complying with a joyful tradition, this year too I have the pleasure of meeting the representatives of the Institutions of the Lazio Region and of the Municipality and Province of Rome. I thank Hon. Ms Renata Polverini, President of the Regional Board of Lazio, Hon. Mr Giovanni Alemanno, Mayor of Rome, and Hon. Mr Nicola Zingaretti, President of the Province of Rome, for their kind words on behalf of all. I reciprocate with cordial good wishes for the New Year to all the citizens of Rome and of the Province and to all the inhabitants of Lazio, to which I feel particularly attached as Bishop of this City, Successor of Peter.

The unique vocation of Rome, the centre of Catholicism and the capital of the Italian State, requires our City to be an example of fruitful and profitable collaboration between the public institutions and the ecclesial community. This collaboration with regard to our mutual skills is particularly urgent today because of the new challenges that are looming on the horizon. The Church, especially through the work of the lay faithful and Catholic associations, wishes to make her contribution through the promotion of the common good and through authentic human progress.

The original cell of society is the family, founded on the marriage of a man and a woman. It is in the family that children learn the human and Christian values which enable them to have a constructive and peaceful coexistence. It is in the family that they learn solidarity between the generations, respect for rules, forgiveness and how to welcome others. It is in their own home that young people, experiencing their parents' affection, discover what love is and learn how to love.

Therefore the family must be supported by administrative policies that are not limited to proposing solutions to contingent problems, but aim to consolidate and develop the family and are accompanied by adequate education.

However sometimes violent acts occur and certain aspects of the family crisis, caused by the rapid social and cultural changes, are aggravated. Even the approval of certain forms of union which distort the essence and purpose of the family end by penalizing those who, not without effort, work to live out stable emotional ties, legally guaranteed and publically recognized. In this perspective the Church sees favourably those initiatives which aim at teaching young people to live love in the logic of the gift of self with a high altruistic vision of sexuality. An educational convergence between the various members of society serves this purpose, so that human love is not reduced to a consumer object but may be perceived and lived as a fundamental experience that gives meaning and a purpose to life.

The mutual giving of husband and wife brings openness to procreation: indeed the desire for fatherhood and motherhood is engraved in the human heart. Many couples would like to welcome the gift of new children but are compelled to wait. It is therefore necessary to give motherhood concrete support as well as to guarantee women with a profession the possibility to reconcile family and work.

All too often, in fact, women are faced with the need to choose between the two. The development of appropriate policies for assistance, as well as structures destined for infants, day nurseries and those run by families, can help ensure that a child is not seen as a problem but rather as a gift and a great joy.

Furthermore, since “openness to life is at the centre of true development” (*Caritas in Veritate*, n. 28), the increased number of abortions that occur in our Region should not leave us indifferent. The Christian community, through the many “Case Famiglia” [foster homes] and “Centri di Aiuto alla Vita” [centres that offer support to mothers and families in difficulty because of a new pregnancy], and other such initiatives, is committed to accompanying and supporting women who find it difficult to welcome a new life. May public institutions understand how to offer their support so that family counsellors are in a position to help these women overcome the causes that can induce them to terminate pregnancy. In this regard, I express my appreciation of the law in force in the Lazio Region which provides for the so-called “family quotient” and considers the conceived child as part of the family; and I hope this legislation will be fully implemented. I am pleased that the City of Rome has already committed itself to this.

At the other end of life is the ageing of the population. Elderly people are a great treasure for society. Their knowledge, experience and wisdom are a patrimony for young people, who need teachers of life. While many of the elderly can count on the support and closeness of their own family, the number of those who are alone and in need of medical and health-care assistance is

growing.

The Church, in our Region too, has always been close to those who find themselves in fragile conditions because of age or unstable health. While I rejoice in the existing synergy with the large Catholic health centres — such as, for example, in the paediatric sector, with the Bambino Gesù Hospital and the public institutions — I hope that these institutions will continue to collaborate with the local entities to assure their service to those who turn to them. I renew the invitation to promote a culture that respects life until its natural end, in the awareness that “the true measure of humanity is essentially determined in relationship to suffering and to the sufferer” (Encyclical *Spe Salvi*, n. 38).

In recent times the serenity of our families is threatened by a serious and persistent economic crisis and many families can no longer guarantee their children an adequate standard of living. Our parishes, through *Caritas*, are doing their utmost to come to the aid of these families as far as possible, alleviating hardship and responding to basic needs. I trust that appropriate measures can be adopted which aim to support low-income families, especially large families which are all too often penalized.

Then there is an additional problem which is every day more dramatic. I am referring to the serious question of work. Young people in particular, who after years of training see few job opportunities and possibilities for social integration or for planning for the future; they often feel disappointed and are tempted to reject society itself. The continuation of such situations causes social tensions that are exploited by organized crime for illegal activities. It is therefore urgent, even in a difficult period, to make every effort to promote employment policies that can guarantee work and a decent livelihood, an indispensable condition for giving life to new families.

Dear Authorities, there are multiple problems which demand solutions. Your duty as administrators who strive to collaborate for the good of the community is always to consider human beings as an end, so that they may live in an authentically human way.

As Bishop of this City I would therefore like to invite you all to find in the word of God the source of inspiration for your political and social action, through “work for the true common good in respecting and promoting the dignity of every person” (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, n. 101).

I assure you all that I will remember you in my prayers, especially those who are beginning their service to the common good today; and as I invoke the maternal protection of the Virgin Mary, *Salus Populi Romani*, on your work, I cordially impart my Blessing, which I willingly extend to the inhabitants of Rome, of the Province and of all Lazio.
