



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE MEETING OF THE
CHRISTIAN / CENTRIST DEMOCRAT INTERNATIONAL***

*Hall of the Swiss, Apostolic Palace of Castel Gandolfo
Saturday, 22 September 2012*

*Mr President,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I am delighted to be able to receive you during the course of the work of the Executive Committee of the Christian/Centrist Democrat International. I would like, first of all, to address my cordial greetings to the numerous delegations from many countries around the world and, in particular, to your President, the Honourable Pier Ferdinando Casini, whom I thank for the courteous words he addressed to me in your name. Five years have passed since our last meeting, during which time the involvement of Christians in society has not ceased to enliven and improve human relations and living conditions. This commitment must not lessen or decrease; rather, it must be proffered with renewed vitality, in view of the persistence and, in some cases, the worsening of the problems we are facing.

The current economic situation is becoming increasingly serious, and its complexity and gravity rightly arouse concern. Yet, in the face of this situation, Christians are called to act and express themselves with a prophetic spirit - that is, a spirit capable of seeing in these transformations the unceasing and mysterious presence of God in history - and thus to shoulder their newly emerging responsibilities with realism, confidence and hope. «The current crisis obliges us to re-plan our journey, to set ourselves new rules and to discover new forms of commitment ... [it] thus becomes an opportunity for discernment, in which to shape a new vision for the future» (Enc. *Caritas in veritate*, 21).

In this way, with confidence not resignation, civil and political activity must be given new incentives to seek solid ethical foundations, the lack of which in the economic field has helped to create the

current global financial crisis (*Address at Westminster Hall*, London, 17 September 2010). Your political and institutional commitment must not, then, be limited to responding to the requirements of market logic. Rather, its central and indispensable goal must remain the search for the common good, correctly understood, and the promotion and protection of the inalienable dignity of the human person. The teaching of Vatican Council II that «the order of things must be subordinate to the order of persons, and not the other way around» (*Gaudium et Spes*, 26) is today more timely than ever. This order of persons «is founded on truth, built up in justice, and animated by love» (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1912), and it cannot be discerned without constant attention to the Word of God and the Magisterium of the Church, especially by people such as you, who draw the inspiration for their activities from Christian principles and values.

Unfortunately the cursory, superficial and short-term responses to the most fundamental and profound human needs are numerous and strident. This makes the words of the Apostle sadly appropriate for our own time, when he warned Timothy of the day in which «people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths» (2 Tim 4:3).

The areas in which this decisive discernment is to be exercised are those touching the most vital and delicate interests of the person, the place where the fundamental choices regarding the meaning of life and the search for happiness are made. These areas are not separate from one another but profoundly interconnected; they possess a manifest continuum which is constituted by respect for the transcendent dignity of human beings (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1929), rooted in the fact that they were made in the image of the Creator and are the ultimate goal of any authentically human social justice. The commitment to respecting life in all its phases from conception to natural death - and the consequent rejection of procured abortion, euthanasia and any form of eugenics - is, in fact, interwoven with respecting marriage as an indissoluble union between a man and a woman and, in its turn, as the foundation for the community of family life. It is in the family, «founded on marriage and open to life» (*Address to the Authorities, Milan*, 2 June 2012), that human beings experience sharing, respect and gratuitous love, at the same time receiving - be they children, the sick or the elderly - the solidarity they need. The family, moreover, constitutes the principal and most significant place for the education of the person, thanks to the parents who place themselves at the service of their children in order to draw out («*e-ducere*») the best that is in them. Thus the family, the basic cell of society, is the root which nourishes not only the individual human being, but the very foundations of social coexistence. Blessed John Paul II was right, then, to include among human rights, «the right to live in a united family and in a moral environment conducive to the growth of the child's personality» (Enc. *Centesimus annus*, 47).

The authentic progress of human society cannot forgo policies aimed at protecting and promoting marriage, and the community that derives therefrom. Adopting such policies is the duty not only of States but of the International Community as a whole, in order to reverse the tendency towards the

growing isolation of the person, which is a source of suffering and atrophy for both individuals and for society.

Honourable ladies and gentlemen, if it is true that the defence and promotion of human dignity «have been entrusted to us by the Creator” as a duty that pertains strictly and responsibly to “men and women at every moment of history” (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1929), it is equally true that this responsibility particularly concerns those called to political office. They, especially if animated by Christian faith, must be «strong enough to provide coming generations with reasons for living and hoping» (*Gaudium et Spes*, 31). In this sense, the warning contained in the Book of Wisdom to the effect that «severe judgement falls on those in high places» (*Wis* 6:5) is highly beneficial, a warning given not to frighten but to spur and encourage those in government, at all levels, to achieve all the good of which they are capable, in keeping with the mission the Lord entrusts to each one.

In the hope, then, that each of you will continue to fulfil your personal and public commitments with enthusiasm and determination, I assure you all of a remembrance in my prayers, and I invoke God’s blessings upon you and your families. Thank you for your attention.