



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS
TO THE COMMUNITY OF WRITERS
OF "LA CIVILTÀ CATTOLICA"**

Hall of Popes

Friday, 14 June 2013

Dear Friends in the Lord,

I am glad to meet you writers, your whole community, the Sisters and the administrative personnel of the house. Since 1850 the Jesuits of *La Civiltà Cattolica* have been carrying out a task that has a special connection with the Pope and with the Apostolic See. In meeting you at audiences my Predecessors recognized on several occasions that this bond is an essential feature of your journal. I would like today to suggest three words to you which may be of help to you in your work.

The first is "dialogue". You are carrying out an important service to culture. The approach and style of *La Civiltà Cattolica* were at first combative and often also harshly polemic, in line with the general atmosphere of the time. On going through the journal over its 163 years one notices the rich variety of positions, due both to the changing circumstances of history and to the personalities of the individual writers. Your faithfulness to the Church still requires of you harsh treatment of hypocrisies that are the product of a closed, sick heart. Harsh, against this illness. However your main duty is not to build walls but bridges; it is to establish a dialogue with all people, even those who do not share the Christian faith but who "respect outstanding human values", and even, "those who oppose the Church and persecute her in various ways" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 92).

There are so many human issues to be discussed and shared, and in dialogue it is always possible to come close to the truth, which is a gift of God, and to be mutually enriching. Carrying on a dialogue means being convinced that others have something good to say, it means making room for their viewpoint, their opinion, their suggestions, without, obviously, slipping into relativism. And in order to keep up a dialogue it is necessary to lower one's guard and open doors. Persevere

in the dialogue with cultural, social and political institutions, in order to make your contribution to the formation of citizens as well, so that they may have at heart the good of all and work for the common good. *Civiltà cattolica* [Catholic civilization] is the civilization of love, mercy and faith.

The second word is “discernment”. It is your duty to gather and express the expectations, aspirations, joys and dramas of our time and to indicate ways to read reality in the light of the Gospel. Today the important spiritual questions are more pressing than ever, but someone must interpret and understand them. With humble and open intelligence, “seek and find God in all things”, as St Ignatius wrote. God is at work in the life of every person and in culture: the Spirit blows where he wills. Endeavour to find out what God has brought about and how to continue his action.

Spiritual discernment is a real treasure of Jesuits. It seeks to recognize in the human and cultural situation the presence of God’s Spirit, the seed of his presence already sown in events, in sensibilities, in desires and in the heart’s profound aspirations and in social, cultural and spiritual contexts. Something that Rahner said crosses my mind: the Jesuit is a specialist in discernment in the field of God and also in that of the Devil. There is no need to be frightened of persevering in discernment in order to discover the truth. I was really impressed when I read Rahner’s remarks.

And seeking God in all things, in all the fields of knowledge, of art, of science, of political and social life and of economics requires study, sensitivity and experience. Some of the subjects you address may not be explicitly related to a Christian outlook but are important in order to grasp the way in which people understand themselves and the world surrounding them. May your informative observation be broad, objective and prompt.

It is also necessary to pay special attention before the truth, goodness and beauty of God. They should always be considered together and are precious allies in the commitment to defend human dignity, in building a peaceful coexistence and in carefully preserving creation. This carefulness gives rise to a serene, sincere and strong view of events which is illuminated by Christ. Great figures such as Matteo Ricci are a model of it.

All this demands that we keep our heart and mind open, avoiding the spiritual illness of self-referentiality. When the Church becomes self-referential she too falls ill and ages. May our gaze, firmly fixed on Christ, be prophetic and dynamic in looking to the future. Thus you will remain ever young and bold in interpreting events!

The third word is “frontier”. The mission of a cultural journal such as *La Civiltà Cattolica* enters today’s cultural debate and proposes both in a serious and accessible way the view that stems from the Christian faith. The rift between the Gospel and culture is without a doubt a drama (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 20). You are called to make your contribution to healing this split which also passes through the heart of each one of you and of your readers. Such a ministry is characteristic

of the mission of the Society of Jesus. Accompany with your thoughts and your in-depth examination the cultural and social processes and all who are going through difficult transitions, even taking conflicts into account.

Your proper place is at the frontier. This is the place of Jesuits. Today too what Paul VI said about the Society of Jesus, taken up by Benedict XVI, applies in a particular way to you: “Wherever in the Church, even in the most difficult and extreme fields, at the crossroads of ideologies, in the social trenches, there has been and there is confrontation between the burning exigencies of man and the perennial message of the Gospel, here also there have been, and there are, Jesuits” (*Address to the Fathers of the General Congregation of the Society of Jesus*, 21 February 2008).

Please be pioneers empowered by God (cf. 2 Cor 3:6). But do not give in to the temptation of domesticating these frontiers: it is essential to go out to the frontiers but not to bring frontiers home to touch them up with a little varnish and tame them. Today’s world, subject to rapid changes and convulsed by matters of great importance for the life of faith, calls for a courageous commitment to educate in a convinced and mature faith, to give life meaning and to offer convincing answers to all who are seeking God. It is a question of supporting the Church’s action in all the fields of her mission.

This year *La Civiltà Cattolica* has been updated. It has a new graphic design, it can also be read in a digital version and also reaches its readers on social networks. These are also frontiers on which you are called to work. Continue on this road!

Dear Fathers, I see among you young, less young and elderly people. Your journal is unique in its kind, born from a community of life and study. As in a harmonious choir, each one has his own voice and must ensure it is in tune with the voices of the others. Courage, dear brothers! I am sure I can count on you. As I entrust you to the Madonna della Strada [Our Lady of the Way], I impart my blessing to you, to the editorial staff, to your collaborators and to the Sisters, as well as to all the journal’s readers.