



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI TO PONTIFICAL GESTATORIAL CHAIR BEARERS

Consistory Hall

Friday, 13 January 2006

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to receive you and I address to each one my cordial greeting, which I extend to your kind consorts, together with my best wishes for every good for the year that has just begun. I have the opportunity to see you almost every day as I carry out my ministry, especially when I receive important figures and groups.

Today, however, is a favourable opportunity to meet you all together, in a family atmosphere, to express to you my appreciation and gratitude for the contribution you make to the smooth functioning of Papal Audiences and celebrations.

Diligence, courtesy and discretion are the qualities that must distinguish you in your work, as you concretely express your love for the Church and your dedication to the Successor of Peter.

The office of the Pontifical Gestatorial Chair Bearers is an ancient one which has evolved down the centuries in various ways, linked to the customs and needs of the times, and it has been consolidated with the strengthening of the unique role of the Church of Rome and of her Bishop.

As the very title recalls, yours is a task that has always been linked to the Chair of Peter. Information about the College of Gestatorial Chair Bearers goes back to the 14th century. They were given various tasks, under the Prefect of the Sacred Apostolic Palaces or the Majordomo, tasks which, for the most part and in a different way, are still in existence today.

All this, dear friends, must bring you to see in your work, over and above its transitory and

temporary aspects, the value of the connection with the Chair of Peter. Your work, therefore, fits into a context where everything must speak to everyone of the Church of Christ, and must do so coherently, imitating the One who "did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10: 45).

Recent reforms introduced by my venerable Predecessors, especially Pope Paul VI, who had to implement the innovations of the Council, are seen in this perspective. The protocol was simplified in order to return to a greater moderation, more in tune with the Christian message and needs of the times.

My hope, dear friends, is that you can always be, in the Vatican as well as at home, in the parish and in every milieu, accommodating and attentive to your neighbour. This is a valuable lesson for your children and grandchildren, who will learn from your example that being at the service of the Holy See requires first of all a Christian mindset and lifestyle.

In the family atmosphere of our meeting, I would like to assure you of a special prayer for your intentions and for those of your loved ones, as I invoke upon you all the motherly protection of Mary Most Holy and of St Peter.

May the Lord help you always to carry out your work in a spirit of faith and sincere love for the Church. To you who are present here and to your loved ones, I warmly impart the Apostolic Blessing.

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