



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

Thursday, 14 January 2010

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am glad to meet you at this traditional event. It gives us the opportunity to exchange cordial good wishes for the New Year and to reflect on the reality of our territory in which the Successor of Peter has been present for 2,000 years as Bishop of Rome and Metropolitan Archbishop of the Roman Ecclesiastical Province that includes the whole of Lazio. I am grateful to you for coming and offer my respectful and cordial greeting to Hon. Mr Esterino Montino, Vice-President of the Regional Board of Lazio, Hon. Mr Gianni Alemanno, Mayor of Rome, Hon. Mr Nicola Zingaretti, President of the Province of Rome, to whom I wish to express my warm thanks for their courteous words also on behalf of the Administrations they head. With them, I greet the President of the respective Council Assemblies and everyone present.

The crisis that has hit the world economy as has been recorded has also had consequences for the inhabitants and business companies of Rome and Lazio. At the same time, it has provided an opportunity to rethink the model of development pursued in the past few years. In the Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, I recalled that if human development is to be authentic it must concern every dimension of the person as a whole and must take place in love and in truth. Indeed, the human person is the focus of political action and his moral and spiritual growth must be a priority for those who are called to administer the civil community. It is fundamental that all who, through the citizens' vote of confidence, have received the lofty responsibility of governing the institutions see as a priority the constant need to pursue the common good, "a good that is sought not for its own sake, but for the people who belong to the social community and who can only really and effectively pursue their good within it" (*Caritas in Veritate*, n. 7). For this to happen it is appropriate that an effort be made at the headquarters of the institutions to encourage a healthy dialectic, since the more widely shared the decisions and provisions are, the better they will ensure their

effective development for all the inhabitants of the territories administered.

In this context I wish to express my appreciation of the efforts made by these Administrations to meet the needs of the weakest and most marginalized classes, with a view to promoting a more just and solidary society. In this regard I would like to ask you to do your utmost to ensure that the centrality of the human being and of the family may be the inspiring principle behind all your decisions. It is particularly necessary to bear this in mind when establishing new urban districts, so that the inhabited complexes springing up may not be solely dormer towns. To this end it is opportune to plan structures designed to encourage socialization. This will prevent the growth and increase of withdrawal into individualism and exclusive attention to personal interests, damaging to all forms of human coexistence. With respect for the civil authorities' competences, the Church is willing to make her own contribution to ensuring that these neighbourhoods have a social life worthy of the human person. I know that this has already happened in various areas on the city's outskirts, thanks to the hard work of the Municipal Administration in establishing important institutions and I hope that these needs will be kept in mind everywhere. I am grateful for the consolidated collaboration that exists between the Administrations you head and the Vicariate, particularly with regard to the building of new parish complexes which, in addition to being reference points for Christian life, also play a fundamental educational and social role.

Such collaboration has made it possible to achieve significant objectives. In this regard, I would like to recall that in certain new quarters, inhabited in particular by young families with small children, the ecclesial communities have set up "children's prayer and recreation centres", aware that openness to life is the heart of true human development (cf. *ibid.*, n. 28). These useful structures enable children to spend the day there while their parents are at work. I am confident that an ever more fruitful synergy between the different institutions will permit the creation of similar structures that help young parents in their educational task, both in the suburbs and in the rest of the City. I likewise hope that further provisions for families will be adopted, especially for those that are numerous, so that the entire City may enjoy the irreplaceable function of this fundamental institution, the first and indispensable cell of society.

As part of the promotion of the common good, the education of the new generations that constitute the future of our Region is a predominant concern that Government Administrators share with the Church and with all other educational organizations. For several years the Dioceses of Rome and Lazio have been committed to making their contribution in order to face the ever more urgent requests coming from the world of youth that demand appropriate, high-profile educational responses. The urgent need to help the young plan their lives in accordance with authentic values that refer to a "lofty" vision of the human being is clear to everyone and the Christian religious and cultural patrimony is one of its most sublime expressions. Today the new generations are asking to know who the human being is and what is the human destiny. They seek responses that can point out to them the way to take in order to found their lives on the perennial values. In particular, in the education that is proposed on the great themes of affectivity and sexuality, so important for

life, it is essential not to present adolescents and young people with approaches that encourage the trivialization of these fundamental dimensions of human existence. To this end, the Church requests the collaboration of all, especially those who work in schools, in order to teach a lofty vision of love and of human sexuality. In this regard I would like to ask everyone to understand that in pronouncing her "nos", in reality the Church is saying "yes" to life, to love lived in the truth of the gift of self to the other, to love that is open to life and is not locked into a narcissistic vision of the couple. She is convinced that these decisions alone can lead to a model of life in which happiness is a shared good. On these themes, as well as on those of the family founded on marriage and on respect for life, from its conception to its natural end, the ecclesial community cannot but be faithful to the truth "which alone is the guarantee of freedom and of the possibility of integral human development" (*ibid.*, n. 9).

Lastly, I cannot but urge the competent authorities to pay constant and consistent attention to the world of sickness and suffering. May the health-care structures so numerous in Rome and in Lazio that offer an important service to the community be places in which one may always find an attentive and responsible management of government, professional skill and generous dedication to the sick, whose acceptance and treatment must be the supreme criterion of all who work in this sphere. For centuries Rome and Lazio have seen the presence of structures of Catholic inspiration that work for large sections of the population, flanking the public health-care structures. Catholic institutions seek to combine professional competence and attention to the sick with the truth and love of Christ. Indeed, by drawing inspiration from the Gospel they strive to be close to the suffering with love and hope, also supporting them in their search for meaning and seeking to provide answers to the questions that inevitably arise in the hearts of those who are experiencing the difficult dimension of illness and pain. In fact the human being needs to be treated in the unity of his spiritual and physical being. I therefore trust that despite the on-going financial problems, these structures may be adequately supported in their precious service.

Distinguished Authorities, as I express my deep gratitude for your courteous and welcome visit, I assure you of my cordial closeness and my prayers for you, for the lofty responsibilities with which you have been entrusted and for those within your administrative scope. May the Lord support you, guide you and fulfil the expectations of good present in the heart of each one.

With these sentiments, I impart the Apostolic Blessing with affection and benevolence, and cordially extend it to your families and to all who live and work in Rome, in its Province and throughout Lazio.

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana