



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO CARD. ANGELO BAGNASCO
ON THE OCCASION OF THE ITALIAN EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE'S
CONVENTION ON THE THEME: "GOD TODAY: WITH HIM
OR WITHOUT HIM EVERYTHING CHANGES"
[ROME, 10-12 DECEMBER 2009]**

*To my Venerable Brother
Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco
Metropolitan Archbishop of Genoa
President of the Italian Episcopal Conference*

On the occasion of the Convention "God today: with him or without him everything changes", which is being held in Rome from 10 to 12 December, I would like to express to you, venerable Brother, to the Italian Episcopal Conference and, in particular, to the Committee for the Cultural Project, my keen appreciation of this important initiative that addresses one of the great subjects that have always fascinated and called into question the human spirit. The question of God is also central in our time, in which there is a frequent tendency to reduce the human being to a single dimension, the "horizontal" one, in the belief that openness to the Transcendent is unimportant for human life. The relationship with God, on the contrary, is essential for humanity's progress, and, as I have had the opportunity to say on many occasions, it is the duty of the Church and of every Christian to make God present in this world, to seek to give human beings access to God.

The international event of these days fits into this perspective. The breadth of approach to this important theme, which characterizes the meeting, will make it possible to set the subject of God in a rich and structured framework, in particular, it will be an incentive for deeper reflection on the place that God occupies in the culture and life of our time. On the one hand, the intention is to show the various ways that lead to affirming the truth about the existence of God, that God whom humanity, in a certain way, has always known, even in its chequered history, and who revealed himself with the splendour of his Face in the Covenant with the people of Israel and, beyond every measure and expectation, fully and definitively, in Jesus Christ. He is the Son of God, the Living

One who enters the life and history of human beings to illumine them with his grace, with his presence. On the other hand, there is a desire to shed light on the essential importance that God has for us, for our personal and social life, for the understanding of ourselves and of the world, for the hope that lights up our journey, for the salvation that awaits us beyond death.

The numerous interventions, according to the multiple perspectives that will be the subject of study and exchanges, are directed toward these goals: from philosophical and theological reflection to the testimony of the great religions; from the yearning for God that finds expression in music, in literature, in the figurative arts, in the cinema and in television to the scientific developments that seek to understand the deepest mechanisms of nature, the fruit of the intelligent work of God the Creator; from analysis of the personal experience of God to consideration of the social and political dynamics of an already globalized world.

In a cultural and spiritual situation such as the one we are experiencing, in which there is a growing tendency to relegate God to the private sphere, to consider him as irrelevant and superfluous or to reject him outright, I sincerely hope that this event may at least contribute to dispelling that doubt which makes openness to God precarious and frightening for the men and women of our time, even though he never ceases to knock at our door. Experiences of the past, even quite recent ones, teach that when God disappears from the human horizon humanity loses its orientation and risks taking steps towards self-destruction. Faith in God opens the person to the horizon of a certain hope that does not disappoint; it indicates a solid basis on which to be able to found life without fear; it asks us to abandon ourselves with trust into the hands of Love that support the world.

I extend to you, Your Eminence, to those who have contributed to preparing the Convention, to the Relators and to all the participants my cordial greeting and my best wishes for the successful outcome of the initiative. I accompany your work with prayer and with my Apostolic Blessing, which will favour that light from on high that makes us capable of finding in God our treasure and our hope.

From the Vatican, 7 December 2009

BENEDICT XVI