



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO DR RICCARDO DI SEGNI
CHIEF RABBI OF ROME**

Monday, 16 January 2006

*Distinguished Chief Rabbi,
Dear Friends, Shalom!*

"My strength and my courage is the Lord, and he has been my Saviour" (Ex 15: 2): thus sang Moses with the Children of Israel when the Lord saved his people by enabling them to cross the sea. In the same way Isaiah sang: "God indeed is my Saviour; I am confident and unafraid. My strength and my courage is the Lord, and he has been my Saviour" (Is 12: 2).

Your visit brings me great joy and spurs me to renew with you this same canticle of gratitude for the salvation obtained. The people of Israel have been released from the hands of enemies on various occasions, and in the centuries of anti-Semitism during the tragic moments of the *Shoah*, the hand of the Almighty sustained and guided them.

The special favour of the God of the Covenant has always accompanied them, giving them the strength to overcome trials. Your Jewish Community, which has been present in the City of Rome for more than 2,000 years, can also witness to this loving divine attention.

The Catholic Church is close and is a friend to you. Yes, we love you and we cannot but love you, because of the Fathers: through them you are *very dear* and beloved brothers to us (cf. Rom 11: 28b). This reciprocal esteem and trust has continued to grow since the Second Vatican Council. Fraternal and cordial contacts continued to develop and were intensified throughout the Pontificate of my Venerable Predecessor, John Paul II.

In Christ we participate in the same heritage of the Fathers as you, to serve Almighty God "with one accord" (Zep 3: 9), grafted onto the one *holy trunk* (cf. Is 6: 13; Rom 11: 16) of the People of God. This makes us Christians aware that, with you, we have the responsibility of cooperating for

the good of all peoples, in justice and in peace, in truth and in freedom, in holiness and in love.

In light of this common mission, we cannot but denounce and battle with determination against the hatred and misunderstandings, injustices and violence that continue to sow anxieties in the hearts of men and women of good will. In this context, how can we not be grieved and concerned about the renewed demonstrations of anti-Semitism that are at times reported?

Distinguished Chief Rabbi, you were recently entrusted with the spiritual guidance of Rome's Jewish Community; you have taken on this responsibility enriched by your experience as a scholar and a doctor who has shared in the joys and sufferings of a great many people. I offer you my heartfelt good wishes for your mission, and I assure you of my own and my collaborators' cordial esteem and friendship.

Furthermore, there are so many urgent needs and challenges, in Rome and in the world, that prompt us to join our hands and hearts in practical initiatives of solidarity, of *tzedek* (justice) and *tzedekah* (charity). Together, we can collaborate in transmitting to the young generations the torch of the Decalogue and hope.

May the Eternal Father watch over you and the entire Jewish Community of Rome! On this special occasion, I make my own the prayer of Pope Clement I as I invoke the blessings of Heaven upon you all: "Give harmony and peace to all the inhabitants of the earth, just as you gave to our fathers when they devoutly called upon you in faith and in truth" (*To the Corinthians* 60, 4).

Shalom!

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