



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE OFFICERS AND AGENTS
OF THE GENERAL INSPECTORATE
FOR PUBLIC SECURITY AT THE VATICAN***

*Clementine Hall
Friday, 12 January 2007*

*Dear Prefect,
Dear General Commissioner,
Dear Officers and Agents,*

After the solemn festivities for Christmas and at the beginning of the new year, the meeting with you who make up the General Inspectorate for Public Security at the Vatican is always a pleasant family event.

I address a cordial greeting to each one of you and I am pleased to have this opportunity to express my appreciation and gratitude to you for your invaluable service.

In particular, I thank Mr Vincenzo Caso, your General Commissioner, for his courteous words; and I also address my gratitude to Prefect Gianni De Gennaro, Chief of Police, and to Prefect Salvatore Festa. I am delighted to offer to everyone my best wishes for the year that has just begun.

In addition to the joy of meeting one another, dear friends, this appointment always offers us an occasion for reflection and helps to reinforce your motivation for the task that has been assigned to you. I well know, also from direct experience, how important your discreet presence is for pilgrims and tourists in the sites that form the heart of Christian Rome.

All the tourists who wish to visit St Peter's Basilica and pause in Bernini's imposing Colonnade see your faces and frequently need your attention.

There is one aspect of this indispensable work that I would like to underline today: the custody of places and the care of people. Care and supervision are essential elements for an understanding of the real meaning of the specific task required of you.

It is your duty to guard and watch over places that have a priceless value for the memory and faith of millions of pilgrims; places that contain great treasures of history and art but where above all, through an inscrutable mystery, the living encounter of the faithful with the Lord Jesus takes place. May the People of God, the pilgrim and every person understand that near you they enjoy a special and reassuring protection. May everyone feel helped and protected by your presence and thereby encouraged to share in the great spiritual patrimony of the Christian community.

As members of this special Public Security Corps, may your concern be to be on the alert in order to see that every person arrives peacefully at the entrance to the holy places; watched over by you, may pilgrims open their hearts wide to the encounter with the true and life-giving God.

Dear brothers and sisters, this reflection applies to each one of us: we are all called to look after our neighbour. The Lord will ask us to account for the responsibility he has entrusted to us, for the good or evil we have done to our brethren: whether we have accompanied them attentively on their daily journey, sharing in the troubles and joys they express from their heart, and whether we have been discreetly and constantly beside them on their journey and helped and supported them when the road became more engaging and tiring.

Dear friends, let us carry one another's burdens together, sharing the joy of belonging to the Lord and of living constantly in the light of his Gospel, the word of truth that saves.

Let us ask the Virgin Mother for her motherly protection at the beginning of this new year and entrust to her every sorrow, trouble and hope, so that in all life's circumstances we may love, rejoice and live in the faith of the Son of God made man for our sake.

With these sentiments, as I wish you serene and successful work, I invoke upon you, upon your families and upon all your dear ones an abundance of heavenly gifts and warmly impart a special Apostolic Blessing to you all.

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