



The Holy See

VISIT TO ROME'S PRISON FOR MINORS, "CASAL DEL MARMO"

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

*Gymnasium in the Juvenile Penitentiary
Fourth Sunday of Lent, 18 March 2007*

Dear Young People,

I would first of all like to say thank you to you for your joy and for your preparation of this visit. It gives me great joy to have given you a little light with my Visit. Thus, our meeting has now come to an end; my brief but intense Visit has come to an end. As was mentioned, this was my first contact with the prison world since my election as Pope.

I listened with attention to the words of the Director, of the Commandant and of your representative, and I thank you for the cordial sentiments you have expressed to me as well as for your good wishes for my name-day.

I also heard that the memory of Cardinal Casaroli, whom you called Fr Agostino in a familiar way, still lives on among you. He spoke to me on various occasions of his experiences here, where he always felt very much a friend and very close to all the boys and girls in this prison.

Dear boys and girls, you come from various nations: I would like to stay longer with you; unfortunately, time is limited. Perhaps on another occasion we will find a longer day. May you know, nonetheless, that the Pope loves you and follows you with affection.

I would next like to take this opportunity to extend my greeting to all those who are in prison and to all who in their various capacities work in the prison environment.

Dear boys and girls, today is a feast day for you as has been said: the Pope has come to see you,

the Minister of Justice, various Authorities, the Cardinal Vicar, the Auxiliary Bishop, your Chaplain and many other figures and friends are present. Thus, it is a day of joy.

The liturgy of this Sunday itself begins with an invitation to be joyful: "Rejoice!" is the first word with which Mass begins.

But how can one be happy when one is suffering, when one is deprived of freedom, when one feels abandoned?

During Mass we recalled that God loves us: this is the source of true joy.

Even if one has all he or she wants, one can sometimes be unhappy; on the other hand, one can be deprived of everything, even freedom or health, and be in peace and joy if God is in his or her heart.

Thus, the secret is this: God must always have first place in our life. And Jesus has revealed the true face of God to us.

Dear friends, before we part, I assure you with all my heart that I will continue to remember you before the Lord. You will always be present in my prayers.

I offer you in advance my best wishes for Easter and I bless you all. May the Lord accompany you always with his Grace and guide you in your future lives.

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