



## The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI  
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE REGIONAL BOARD OF LAZIO,  
THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF ROME  
AND THE PROVINCE OF ROME  
FOR THE TRADITIONAL EXCHANGE OF NEW YEAR GREETINGS**

*Clementine Hall*

*Thursday, 10 January 2008*

*Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I am pleased to receive you at the beginning of the New Year for our traditional exchange of greetings. I thank you for coming here and offer my respectful and cordial greeting to the President of the Regional Board of Lazio, Hon. Mr Pietro Marrazzo, to the Mayor of Rome, Hon. Mr Walter Veltroni, to Hon. Mr Enrico Gasbarra, President of the Province of Rome, to whom I wish to express sentiments of deep gratitude for their kind words to me, also on behalf of the Boards they head. With them, I greet the Presidents of the respective Council Assemblies and all of you who are gathered here.

This annual meeting gives us the opportunity to reflect on some subjects of common interest and of great importance and timeliness which closely affect the life of the populations of Rome and Lazio. Through you, I address to them, to each person and each family, an affectionate thought of encouragement and pastoral attention, expressing those sentiments and bonds that have united the Successors of the Apostle Peter to the City of Rome, to its Province and to the entire Region of Lazio. Times and situations change but the Pope's love and concern for all who live in these regions, so deeply marked by the great and living heritage of Christianity, never weaken.

A fundamental criterion on which we may easily agree in carrying out our different tasks is that of the centrality of the human person. As the Second Vatican Council said, "*man is the only creature on earth that God has wanted for its own sake*" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 24). My beloved Predecessor, the Servant of God John Paul II, rightly wrote in turn in his Encyclical *Centesimus*

*Annus* that "man's principal resource is man himself" (n. 32). An obvious consequence of all this is the crucial importance of the person's education and training, first and foremost in the first phase of life but also throughout the whole of his existence. Yet, if we look at the reality of our situation, we cannot deny that we are facing a true and large-scale "educational emergency", as I [emphasized last 11 June, speaking to the Convention of the Diocese of Rome](#) (*L'Osservatore Romano* English edition [ORE], 20 June 2007, p. 3). Indeed, it seems ever more difficult to convincingly propose solid certainties and criteria on which the new generations can build their lives. This is well known to both parents and teachers, who for this reason are all too often tempted to abdicate their own educational duties. Moreover, in the contemporary social context permeated by relativism as well as nihilism, they themselves have trouble in finding reliable reference points to sustain and guide them in their role as educators and in the way they lead their life as a whole.

Such an emergency, distinguished Representatives of the Boards of Rome and Lazio, cannot leave either the Church or your Boards indifferent. Clearly at stake, in fact, with the formation of individuals, are the actual foundations of coexistence and of society's future. The Diocese of Rome, for its part, is paying truly special attention to this difficult task being carried out in the different educational contexts, from the family and school to the parishes, associations and movements, oratories, cultural initiatives, sports and free time. In this context, I express deep gratitude to the Lazio Region for its support of oratories and other centres for children organized by parishes and Ecclesial Communities, as well as for its contribution to building new parish complexes in the areas of Lazio that are still without them. However, I wish above all to encourage a converging, widescale commitment in order to enable civil institutions, each in its own capacity, to redouble their efforts to face the various dimensions of the current educational emergency, constantly inspired by the guiding criterion of the centrality of the human person.

It is clear here that respect and support for the family founded on marriage are imperative. As I wrote in the recent [Message for the World Day of Peace](#), "The natural family, as an intimate communion of life and love, based on marriage between a man and a woman, constitutes "the primary place of "humanization" for the person and society', and a "cradle of life and love" (ORE, 19/26 December 2007, p. 8, n. 2). Unfortunately, we see every day how insistent and threatening are the attacks on marriage and the misunderstandings of this fundamental human and social reality. Thus, it is especially necessary that public administrations do not support these negative trends but, on the contrary, offer families convinced and concrete support, in the certainty that they are thereby acting for the common good.

Another emergency that is becoming ever more acute is that of poverty: it is increasing above all in the great urban suburbs but is also beginning to be felt in other contexts and situations which seemed to be safe from it. The Church participates wholeheartedly in the effort to alleviate poverty. She willingly collaborates with civil institutions but the cost of life, especially the price of housing, the persistent pockets of unemployment and also the frequently inadequate salaries and

pensions truly make the living conditions of numerous people and families difficult.

One tragic event, such as the killing of Giovanna Reggiani in Tor di Quinto has also brusquely confronted our citizens not only with the problem of security but also with the very serious degradation of certain Roman neighbourhoods: here especially, constant and concrete interventions are required that go far beyond the emotion of the moment, which has the twofold and inseparable purpose of guaranteeing the safety of citizens and assuring everyone, particularly immigrants, of at least the minimum indispensable for an honest and dignified life. Through Caritas and many other voluntary associations, the Church, animated by lay people and men and women religious, is doing all she can also on this difficult front where the responsibilities and possibilities for the public Authorities' intervention are obviously indispensable.

Another concern that regards both the Church and your Boards is the plight of the sick. We well know the grave difficulties that the Lazio Region must face but we must also note that the situation of Catholic health-care structures is often dramatic, even very prestigious ones of recognized national excellence. I cannot, therefore, refrain from asking that they not be penalized in the distribution of resources, not because of the Church's own interest but in order not to jeopardize an indispensable service to our peoples.

Distinguished Authorities, as I thank you once again for your kind and appreciated visit, I assure you of my cordial closeness and my prayers for you and for the lofty responsibilities entrusted to you. May the Lord sustain your commitment and enlighten your good resolutions. With these sentiments, I warmly impart to each one of you the Apostolic Blessing, which I gladly extend to your families and to all who live and work in Rome, in its Province and throughout Lazio.