



The Holy See

VISIT OF THE HOLY FATHER TO THE CAPITOLINE HILL

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Monday, 10 June 2024

[Multimedia]

*Lord Mayor,
Assessors and Councillors of the Municipality of Rome,
Distinguished Authorities,
Dear friends!*

I thank the Lord Mayor for the welcome invitation and the kind expressions he addressed to me; and I thank the President of the Capitoline Assembly for her words of welcome. I greet the Councillors of the Municipality, the Representatives of the Government, the other Authorities present and all the citizens of Rome.

In coming back to visit you, I feel sentiments of gratitude and joy. I come to meet you and, through you, the entire city, which almost from its birth, around 2,800 years ago, has had a clear and constant vocation of universality. For the Christian faithful, this role is not the fruit of chance, but corresponded to a providential plan.

Ancient Rome, due to its legal development and its organizational capacities, and the construction throughout the centuries of solid and lasting institutions, became a beacon to which many peoples turned for stability and security. This process allowed it to be a radiating centre of civilization and to welcome people from all parts of the world and integrate them into its civil and social life, even to the point of having not a few of them assume the highest magistracies of the state.

This ancient Roman culture, which undoubtedly experienced many good values, on the other hand

needed to elevate itself, to confront a greater message of fraternity, love, hope and liberation.

The aspiration of that civilization, which had reached its heyday, offers a further explanation for the rapid spread of the Christian message in Roman society. The shining testimony of the martyrs and the dynamism of charity of the first communities of believers intercepted the need to hear new words, words of eternal life. Olympus was no longer enough; it was necessary to go to Golgotha and to the empty tomb of the Risen One to find the answers to the yearning for truth, for justice, for love.

This Good News, or rather the Christian faith, over time would permeate and transform the life of people and of the institutions themselves. It would offer people a far more radical and unprecedented hope; it would offer institutions the possibility of evolving to a higher stage, gradually abandoning - for example - an institution such as slavery, which even to so many cultured minds and sensitive hearts had seemed a natural and taken for granted fact, not at all susceptible to abolition.

Slavery is a very significant example of the fact that even refined civilizations can present cultural elements so rooted in the mentality of the people and of society as a whole that they are no longer perceived as contrary to human dignity. This is also the case today, when, almost unconsciously, there is sometimes a risk of being selective, partial, in the defence of human dignity, marginalizing or discarding certain categories of people, who end up finding themselves without adequate protection.

The Rome of the Caesars was succeeded, so to speak, by the Rome of the Popes, successors of the Apostle Peter, who “preside in charity” over all the Church and who, in some centuries, also had to play a role as a substitute for the civil powers in the progressive unravelling of the ancient world, and sometimes, with unfortunate behaviour. Many things changed, but Rome’s vocation to universality was confirmed and exalted. If in fact the geographical horizon of the Roman Empire had its heart in the Mediterranean world and, although very vast, did not involve the entire Orbe, the mission of the Church has no boundaries on this earth, because it must make Christ, His action and His words of salvation known to all peoples.

Starting from the unification of Italy, a new phase began in which, after the clashes and misunderstandings with the new unitary State, in the context of what was named the “*Roman question*”, ninety-five years ago a conciliation between civil power and the Holy See was reached.

This year marks the fortieth anniversary of the revision of the Concordat. It reaffirmed that the Italian State and the Catholic Church are, “each in its own order, independent and sovereign and commit themselves to the full respect of this principle in their mutual relations and to reciprocal collaboration for the full promotion of man and the common good of the Country” (Article 1 of the Agreement for the Revision of the Concordat, 3 June 1985).

Rome has always confirmed itself, even in these most recent historical phases, in its universal vocation, as shown by the work of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, the various Holy Years celebrated, the signing of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, as well as the Treaty establishing the International Criminal Court, the 1960 Olympics, and the international organizations, in particular the FAO, which have their headquarters in Rome.

Now Rome is about to host the Jubilee 2025. This event is of a religious nature, a prayerful and penitent pilgrimage to obtain from divine mercy a more complete reconciliation with the Lord. However, it cannot but involve the city too, in terms of the care and works necessary to welcome the many pilgrims who will visit it, in addition to the tourists who come to admire its immense treasure of works of art and the grandiose traces of past centuries. Rome is unique. This is why the forthcoming Jubilee can also have a positive impact on the very face of the city, improving its decorum and making public services more efficient, not only in the centre but also by bringing the centre and the suburbs closer together. This is very important, because the city is growing and this attention, this relationship becomes more important every day. And that is why I like to go and visit the suburban parishes, so that they can feel that the bishop is close to them; because it is very easy to be close to the centre - I am in the centre -, but to go and visit the suburbs is the presence of the bishop there.

It is unthinkable that all this could take place in an orderly and safe fashion without the active and generous collaboration of the authorities of the Capitoline and national municipalities. In this regard, I warmly thank the municipal authorities for their commitment in preparing Rome to welcome the pilgrims of the forthcoming Jubilee, and I thank the Italian Government for its full willingness to cooperate with the ecclesiastical authorities for the success of the Jubilee, confirming the desire for friendly cooperation that characterizes the mutual relations between Italy and the Holy See, which are human relations. Many times, pettiness can lead us to think that relations are about money: no, this is secondary. They are human relations between authorities.

Rome is a city with a universal spirit. This spirit wishes to be at the service of charity, at the service of welcome and hospitality. May pilgrims, tourists, migrants, those in dire straits, the poorest, the lonely, the sick, prisoners, the excluded, be the truest witnesses of this spirit - which is why I have decided to open a Holy Door in a prison - and may they bear witness that authority is fully such when it places itself at the service of all, when it uses its legitimate power to meet the needs of the citizenry and, in particular, of the weakest, the last. And this is not only for you politicians, it is also for priests, for bishops. Closeness, closeness to God's people to serve them, to accompany them.

May Rome continue to show its face, a welcoming, hospitable, generous, noble face. The enormous influx of pilgrims, tourists and migrants into the city, with all this entails in terms of organization, could be seen as an aggravation, a burden that slows down and hinders the normal flow of things. In reality, all this is Rome, its specificity, *unique in the world*, its honour, its great attraction and its responsibility towards Italy, towards the Church, towards the human family. Its

every problem is the “flip side” of its greatness and, from being a crisis factor, can become an opportunity for development: civil, social, economic, cultural.

The immense treasure of culture and history nestled in the hills of Rome is the honour and the burden of its citizenry and its rulers, and expects to be properly valued and respected. May everyone be aware of the value of Rome, of the symbol that it represents in all continents - let us not forget the myth of Rome's origin as a rebirth from the ruins of Troy - and may the reciprocal active collaboration between all the powers that reside there be confirmed, or rather, may it grow, by a choral and constant action that makes it even more worthy of the role that destiny, or rather Providence, has reserved for it.

For decades, ever since I was a young priest, I was always devoted to the *Salus Populi Romani*, and every time I went to Rome, I visited her. I ask her, the *Salus Populi Romani*, who watches over the city and people of Rome, to instil hope and inspire charity, so that, confirming its most noble traditions, it may continue to be, in our time too, a beacon of civilization and a promoter of peace. Thank you.

Impromptu greeting to the employees gathered in Piazza del Campidoglio

Good morning! I greet you all, AMA, the Civil Protection, the gendarmes, the people who work here: thank you very much for your welcome, thank you very much!

I will permit myself today, at this moment, to say a prayer for Rome, for our city.

Hail Mary...

[*Blessing*]

Thank you for your work, thank you for what you do for the city! And please, do not forget to pray for me, in my favour! Thank you.

Holy See Press Office Bulletin, 10 June 2024