



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION OF ROME**

Saturday, 22 February 1997

*Mr President of the Provincial Board,
Mr President of the Provincial Council,
Distinguished Members of the Board and Council,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

1. I am pleased to meet you this morning for the traditional exchange of best wishes at the beginning of the new year. I extend a cordial greeting to those present and thank Hon. Giorgio Fregosi, President of the Provincial Board, in particular for his reflections and for the best wishes he has offered me on behalf of you all.

I also offer my very best wishes for the year that begun a short time ago to you, distinguished ladies and gentlemen gathered here, to your staff and to all the people of the Province of Rome. May 1997 be rich in fruitful endeavour of service to the common good and bring serenity and peace to every area of civil life!

2. It has just been recalled how in our day *renewed attention is being given to the tasks and responsibilities of public administration*. This widespread sensitivity to institutions is accompanied by a growing demand for participation in the running of public affairs, and the desire to give increasing importance to autonomous local bodies. This is a significant feature of the present moment in history, marked by rapid and frequently profound social changes. There is a growing desire to take part in the decisions concerning the future of the whole community and, at the same time, an increasing awareness that no institution can be “used”, but must be “served” with selfless dedication.

To meet these expectations, Rome's Provincial Administration is also called to make a specific contribution based on its own responsibilities. In this service, it can count on the collaboration of the Christian community, which, while remaining within its own area of involvement, would like to offer its effective support to fully utilizing the potential found in the territory. In any case, it is important to recognize *the centrality of the human person*, who should be served by every structure and institution, in order to build up a society of ever greater freedom and solidarity. I say this thinking especially of the young people who expect concrete answers to their hopes and problems, and who often look at their future with anxiety. We must be capable of "providing the generations to come with reasons for life and optimism" (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 31).

3. Attention to young people naturally recalls other delicate aspects of social life in our time: first of all the problem of the *employment shortage*, which is often combined with other unstable conditions for both the individual and the family. How many efforts are being made in this area and how much still remains to be done! Despite the considerable difficulties, the joint endeavour and commitment of all must never be lacking.

Moreover, the Church is close to all those who devote themselves courageously to the *improvement of living conditions*, defending and making the most of environmental and cultural resources, as well as carefully attending to human settlements. She is concerned that all areas of human life should be given the necessary attention, from those which concern physical health to those on the spiritual level. Indeed, precisely by starting from a religious concept of man and nature it is possible *to foster a healthy respect for every living being*. Awareness of having received from God the task of safeguarding creation will help man not to pollute or damage natural resources and will commit him to making the earth a home for all, where justice and peace prevail.

4. Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, there are many other topics which in circumstances such as these deserve attention. I have limited myself to pointing out a few, echoing what the President of the Board wished to emphasize in his opening speech. However, I must add a necessary reference to the celebration of *the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000*. I much appreciate the readiness of the Province of Rome to work with the Dioceses located in its territory. I hope that this understanding will become deeper and deeper in view of the forthcoming Jubilee.

On this topic, the Provincial Administration intends to start concrete, far-reaching initiatives to accompany the large scale infrastructure projects already planned. I especially appreciate that hospitality centres are being set up and I hope that projects such as these will succeed in creating a climate of collaboration and participation in view of the historic event. The Church in Rome, together with the whole Christian community, has recently begun the three-year period of immediate preparation for this epochal goal. It is primarily a spiritual journey of conversion and renewal based on the Gospel: that is why at this time copies of Mark's Gospel are being distributed to all the families in Rome, and today I am pleased to present one to each of you personally.

All are invited to make this journey, which will certainly give rise to new hope in our communities. The basic spiritual journey necessarily needs to be backed by the public administration's efforts to organize the indispensable initiatives for the Jubilee. I thank the Province of Rome for all it will do within the scope of its competence.

5. With our eyes turned towards the beginning of the third Christian millennium, I renew to you all, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, my cordial wishes for serenity and peace in the new year.

I also promise to pray for you, your families and your service to society, as I invoke God's blessing upon you all.

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