



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MAYOR AND MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF ROME,
REGIONAL BOARD AND COUNCIL OF LAZIO
AND THE PROVINCIAL BOARD AND COUNCIL OF ROME**

Thursday, 18 January 2001

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. This year I again have the pleasure of receiving you together for the traditional exchange of greetings at the beginning of the New Year. In this way the ties rooted in the history of two millennia linking Peter's Successor to Rome, to its Province and to the Lazio Region are strengthened and invigorated.

I extend a cordial greeting to the President of the Regional Board of Lazio, the Hon. Francesco Storace, to the Mayor of Rome, the Hon. Francesco Rutelli, and to the President of the Province of Rome, the Hon. Silvano Moffa. I am very grateful to them for their kind words to me on behalf of the administrations they head. With them, I also greet the presidents of the respective councils and all who are present.

2. Today's meeting takes place a few days after the close of the Great Jubilee: I feel the need to express my deepest gratitude to all of you and to the institutions you represent for your generous and professional contribution to the success of this Holy Year. It will remain in our memory, as well as in the history of the Church and of the human family, as a time of blessing and grace. We have been helped and encouraged, as believers, to live our relationship with Jesus Christ with renewed intensity. The Jubilee experience has also allowed us to strengthen and to practise that universal brotherhood which forms the sure basis of all genuine social and civil progress. The City, the Province of Rome and the Lazio Region certainly emerge from the Jubilee enriched by a fruitful cooperation, in which religious and secular institutions worked actively together to welcome pilgrims and visitors from every corner of the earth.

I cannot forget, in this regard, the support you gave to important Jubilee events, particularly World Youth Day. Your efforts to make Rome and Lazio as welcoming and hospitable as possible and to accompany the great availability and generosity of our communities with suitable measures and institutional projects have born excellent fruit and serve as an experience to be developed in the future. In this way, the Jubilee will not only continue to make its beneficial effects felt in the religious community, but in the civil as well.

3. All the good we received in the Holy Year calls us to face the tasks and responsibilities that now await us with fresh enthusiasm and confidence. In your office as public administrators, the sure and enlightening reference-point continues to be the persistent and concrete search for the common good, especially in the sectors that most directly affect the citizens' lives, the values that should motivate them, the obstacles and problems that make it difficult at times.

I feel it my duty to call your attention, first of all, to the great theme of the family and the fundamental role it plays in the growth and formation of the younger generation, as well as in the development of human relations marked by love and solidarity. The family should be the centre of social policies, and respect must be shown for its proper identity as a permanent union between man and woman based on marriage, which can never be made equivalent to any other form of relationship. I am pleased with the measures adopted by your administrations that benefit families by recognizing their "social subjectivity" and by meeting their greatest needs, with special concern for young families. It is also necessary to think of the elderly, ever more numerous in Rome and Lazio, especially regarding the loneliness that marks the lives of so many of them.

The ageing of the population shows the urgent need for a culture, a policy and a social organization that are truly pro-life. Proposals and measures, then, which benefit motherhood and the protection of life from conception to its natural end deserve sincere support: a fundamental challenge for our future is at stake here.

4. Next, issues concerning the education of children and young people deserve great effort. In this regard, do not be afraid to adopt courageous measures concerning the effective parity of schools and the most beneficial use of structures such as parish oratories, which make a great contribution to offering a sound formation and preventing worrying forms of juvenile hardship.

And what should we say about health care? In this area not only are the technical quality and timeliness of services important, but also human warmth and thoughtful concern for the sick and their relatives. Today, moreover, the health-care sector is expanding in conjunction with a number of conditions that can improve the quality of life. I thank God that in our city and region important measures are being taken to guarantee substantial progress in health-care capacities, with likely benefits for the inhabitants of other regions as well. Allow me to stress the need, in the rapid, continual evolution of health-care structures, never to compromise the opportunity for spiritual assistance to the sick as well as to all health-care personnel but, on the contrary, to respect it fully

and preserve it. This is a particularly worthy contribution to the full humanization of medicine.

5. Then there are the many problems connected with strengthening the productive sector and developing the capacity for innovation on which economic security and employment largely depend. Certainly, the public administrations cannot resolve all this on their own. However, they are called to give indispensable encouragement and direction to these fields by ensuring, for their own part, the essential conditions for this development. I refer not only to the structural, technical and organizational aspects, but also to the formation of individuals: for we know that people are the primary and principal resource, even at the economic level.

One last point which I would like to mention is that of the citizens' safety. This need is felt by all and is particularly acute in certain urban and suburban areas. The adoption of effective measures in this sector too would greatly help to increase trust in institutions and a sense of common citizenship. It would also facilitate the acceptance and integration of the many immigrants who come to Rome and Lazio out of a desire for honest work and more acceptable living conditions.

6. Honourable Representatives of the Regional, Provincial and Municipal Administrations, I have been able to highlight with you certain topics of great interest for the good of our communities. As I thank you for your support of the Church's life and activities, I would like to assure you that in each of these areas the heartfelt and disinterested contribution of the Christian communities of Rome and Lazio will not be lacking.

I entrust to the Lord in prayer all your projects and good intentions, and I ask Blessed Mary to protect and accompany you and your work with her powerful intercession.

With these sentiments, I impart my Apostolic Blessing to each of you, to your families and to all who live in Rome, in its Province and in Lazio.