



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II TO LEADERS OF THE PROVINCE OF ROME

Thursday, 13 January 2005

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I am pleased to welcome you at the beginning of the New Year for the traditional exchange of greetings, and I offer each one of you my most cordial good wishes.

I greet respectfully Hon. Mr Francesco Storace, President of the Lazio Region, Hon. Mr Walter Veltroni, Mayor of Rome, and Hon. Mr Enrico Gasbarra, President of the Province of Rome. I thank them for expressing the common sentiments of those present. I also greet the Presidents and Members of the three Council Assemblies and their staff. My thoughts then go to all the inhabitants of the City, Province and Region; I affectionately wish them a year of serenity, spiritual and civil growth, and peace.

2. On this occasion, I would like first of all to tell you once again of my deep pleasure at the approval of the Statutes of the Lazio Region. Indeed, in addition to emphasizing Rome's role as a centre of Catholicism, they explicitly recognize the primacy of the person and the fundamental value of life. They also recognize the rights of the family as a natural society founded on marriage, they propose to support families in the fulfilment of their social role, and they explicitly mention the regional permanent observer on families. The Statutes also provide for the Region to guarantee the right to study and freedom in the choice of education.

3. A further cause for satisfaction is the signing of the Protocol of Agreement between the Vicariate, the Municipality and the Region concerning the construction of new parish complexes on the city outskirts. This Accord, rightly inspired by the principle of subsidiarity, will make it easier to build new parishes which, in addition to providing pastoral care, also upgrade the urban area and function as social centres where people can meet. Also on the agenda is collaboration between

the Church and the Municipal, Provincial and Regional Institutions for the promotion of cultural events that will make the most of our great artistic, historical and spiritual heritage.

4. Among the problems that deserve special attention, I would like first to point out housing, especially for young families with a modest income. A joint effort by the institutions is indispensable in this regard, given the social implications that the lack of an adequate home entails for founding a new family and for having children.

The sad phenomena of drug addiction and more generally, hardship among youth, in turn require constant watchful attention and commitment, to provide young people with as good a future as possible.

Then what can be said of the urban traffic that becomes more congested and nerve-wracking from year to year? It causes considerable difficulties in the daily lives of many people and families. I very much hope that the bodies concerned can combine their contribution to improve the situation of urban traffic and transport. I eagerly hope that the matter of the condition of the roads and of city transport may be radically confronted with the contribution of all responsible bodies. With this in view, the opening of new communicating thoroughfares would certainly be helpful.

5. Honourable Representatives of the Regional, Provincial and Municipal Boards, I assure you of the support of my prayers for you and your daily work. With these sentiments, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to you and gladly extend it to your families and to all who live and work in Rome, in its Province and throughout Lazio.

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