



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CIRCLE OF ST PETER

*Hall of Popes
Saturday, 25 February 2006*

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to welcome you and I offer each one of you my cordial greeting. I greet all the members of the General Presidency of the "Circolo San Pietro", and in particular the President, Don Leopoldo dei Duchi di Torlonia, whom I thank for his courteous words introducing our meeting.

This traditional gathering that takes place immediately after the Feast of the Chair of St Peter is a particularly important event at which your praiseworthy Association presents to the Pope the "Peter's Pence" collected in the Diocese of Rome in the past year.

Thus, it is a favourable opportunity for me to express my deep gratitude to you, thinking of the commitment you devote to this task and even more, of the spirit of faith and love for the Church with which you carry it out.

"Peter's Pence" is the most typical expression of the participation of all the faithful in the Bishop of Rome's projects of good for the universal Church. The collection is a gesture that not only has practical value but is also highly symbolic as a sign of communion with the Pope and attention to the needs of the brethren, and for this reason your service has a particularly ecclesial value.

All these acquires greater importance in light of my Encyclical on Christian love, *Deus Caritas Est*, whose second part, as you know, is dedicated precisely to the exercise of charity by the Church as a "community of love".

Therefore, dear leaders of the "Circolo San Pietro", I would like to present the Encyclical to you in spirit. As faithful lay people who are also deeply involved in charity work, you are among the first to

whom it is addressed.

Indeed, thinking precisely of all those who, like you, collaborate in what we might call the Christian community's ministry of charity, I outlined a profile which might be useful to you as a reference (cf. nn. 33-39). I recalled that the main motivation for charitable activity must always be the love of Christ; that charity is more than a mere activity and implies the gift of self; that this gift must be humble, free of any superiority, and that its power derives from prayer, as the example of the Saints shows.

I would therefore like to entrust the "Circolo di San Pietro" to the Saints of charity who abound in the history of the Church of Rome, starting with the Deacon Lawrence.

Dear friends, I thank you once again for your visit and for the service that you have carried out with dedication for so many years at the Pope's service. Upon each one of you I invoke the protection of Mary Most Holy, so that she will accompany you and support you always.

As for me, I assure you of my remembrance in prayer as I bless you wholeheartedly, together with all the members and your families.

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