



The Holy See

***FAREWELL ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE ECCLESIAL AND CIVIL COMMUNITY OF CASTEL GANDOLFO***

Hall of the Swiss, Papal Summer Residence

Monday, 29 September 2008

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This year too, the time has come to take my leave of you at the end of the summer season. Before returning to the Vatican I feel a pressing need to renew my sincere gratitude for all that you have done for me and for my collaborators. I first greet and thank Bishop Marcello Semeraro of Albano Laziale, the parish priest of Castel Gandolfo and the parish community, together with the religious community who live and work here. In various circumstances I have met with all of you, and today I would like to repeat to you that the Pope is grateful for your material and spiritual support.

I next greet Mr Mayor and the members of the Municipal Administration who always express their closeness to me. Dear friends, I am aware of how much care you take during my stay. As I have told you on other occasions, I deeply appreciate your hospitality and your efforts to ensure me of all possible assistance, as well as to the guests and pilgrims who come to visit me, especially on Sundays for the customary Angelus. Please convey my gratitude to the entire population of Castel Gandolfo.

I now address with equal affection the organizers and the staff in charge of the many services of the Governorate. I have had the chance to appreciate the competence and dedication of each one of you, dear brothers and sisters, and I am grateful to you for everything. May the Lord help you and make your daily work fruitful.

The large family that is formed around the Pope at Castel Gandolfo also includes you, dear employees and agents of the various Italian Police Forces, whom I thank for your daily example and dedication. Today's liturgical commemoration of the holy Archangels Michael, Raphael and Gabriel also affords me the opportunity to greet you with special affection, dear officers and

members of the Corps of the Vatican Gendarmeria, who always work in close collaboration with the Pontifical Swiss Guard Corps, to whom I address my grateful greeting. You are all, as it were, the Pope's faithful custodians.

Then I cannot forget the officials and airmen of the 31st Squadron of the Italian Air Force. I thank them for the high quality service they offer me and my collaborators in transporting us by helicopter or aeroplane. Dear friends, I express my sincere gratitude to each one of you.

I said just now that today's liturgy invites us to remember the holy Archangels, Michael, Gabriel and Raphael. Each one of them, as we read in the Bible, carried out a special mission in the history of salvation. Dear brothers and sisters, let us trustingly invoke their help, as well as the protection of the Guardian Angels whose feast we shall be celebrating in a few days' time, on 2 October. The invisible presence of these blessed spirits is a great help and comfort to us; they walk beside us and protect us in every circumstance, they defend us from danger and we may have recourse to them at every moment. Many saints cultivated a rapport of true friendship with the Angels, and numerous episodes testify to their assistance on specific occasions. Angels are sent by God "to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation" as the Letter to the Hebrews (1: 14) recalls, and are therefore a valuable help to us on our earthly pilgrimage towards the heavenly homeland.

My thanks, once again, to you all, also for your presence at this meeting; I thank those who have expressed your sentiments. I entrust you to the maternal protection of Mary, Queen of Angels, and warmly impart my Apostolic Blessing to you, which I extend to your families and to your loved ones.

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