



The Holy See

VISIT AT THE CAPITOLINE HILL

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE ROMAN PEOPLE GATHERED
IN THE SQUARE OUTSIDE THE SENATORIAL PALACE**

Capitoline Hill

Monday, 9 March 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

After meeting the Administrators of the City, I am very glad to offer my cordial greeting to all of you who have gathered on this square on the Capitoline Hill, towards which the colonnade, with which Bernini completed the splendid structure of the Vatican Basilica, reaches out embracing it in spirit. Having lived for so many years in Rome, by now I have become somewhat Roman; but I feel more Roman as your Bishop. Thus with deeper participation I address my thoughts, through each one of you, to all "our" fellow citizens, who in a certain way you are representing today: to the families, communities and parishes, to the children, to the young and the old and to the disabled and the sick, to the volunteers, to the social workers, the immigrants and pilgrims. I thank the Cardinal Vicar who has accompanied me on my Visit and I encourage all those priests, consecrated and lay people who actively collaborate with the public Administrations for the good of Rome, its suburbs and bordering towns, to persevere in their commitment.

A few days ago, while I was speaking with the parish priests and clergy of Rome, I said that the heart of Rome is a "poetic heart", to stress that beauty is as it were "a natural privilege... a natural charism". Rome is beautiful because of the vestiges of her antiquity, the cultural institutions and monuments that tell of her history, the churches and their numerous artistic masterpieces. However, Rome is beautiful above all because of the generosity and holiness of so many of her children who have left eloquent traces of their passion for the beauty of God, the beauty of love that does not age or wither. The Apostles Peter and Paul were witnesses to this, as were the

throng of martyrs at the beginning of Christianity; many men and women who Roman by birth or by adoption did their utmost through the centuries to serve young people, the sick, the poor and all the needy. I limit myself to mentioning but a few: St Lawrence the Deacon, St Frances of Rome, whose feast is celebrated today, St Philip Neri, St Gaspare del Bufalo, St Giovanni Battista de Rossi, St Vincent Pallotti, Bl. Anna Maria Taigi and the husband and wife Blesseds Luigi and Maria Beltrami Quattrocchi. Their example shows that when a person encounters Christ he does not withdraw into himself but is open to the needs of others and, in every social milieu, puts the good of others before his own interests.

There is a real need for such men and women in our time too because many families and many young people and adults are in precarious and sometimes even dramatic situations; these situations can only be overcome together, as Rome's history, which knew many a difficult time, also teaches. In this regard, a verse by Ovid, the great Latin poet, springs to mind. In one of his elegies he encouraged the Romans of his time with these words: "*Perfer et obdura: multo graviora tulisti hold out and persist: you have got through far more difficult situations*" (cf. *Trist.*, lib. v, el. xi v. 7). In addition to the necessary solidarity and the proper commitment of all, we can always count on the unfailing help of God who never abandons his children.

Dear friends, when you return to your homes, your communities and your parishes, tell everyone you meet that the Pope assures them all of his understanding, his spiritual closeness and his prayers. Please bring each one, especially the sick, the suffering and those in the most difficult situations my remembrance and God's Blessing, which I now impart to you through the intercession of Sts Peter and Paul, St Frances of Rome, Co-Patron of Rome. And especially of Mary *Salus populi romani*. May God bless and protect Rome and all its inhabitants always!

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