



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE OFFICERS AND PERSONNEL
OF THE ITALIAN STATE POLICE***

Hall of Blessings

Friday, 21 January 2011

*Distinguished Chief of Police,
Distinguished Directors and Officers,
Dear Agents and Civil Personnel of the State Police Force,*

I am truly glad to have this meeting with you. I welcome you to the House of Peter, this time not because you are on duty but to see each other, to speak to each other and to greet each other in a more familiar way. I greet in particular the Chief of Police, thanking him for his courteous words, as well as the other directors and the Chaplain; a cordial greeting to your relatives, especially the children!

I would like first of all to thank you for all the work you do for the city of Rome, of which I am Bishop, to ensure that its life is orderly and safe. I also express my gratitude for the additional dedication that my activities demand of you!

The time in which we live is affected by profound changes. Rome, rightly called the “Eternal City”, has also changed considerably and is still evolving. We experience this every day and you are privileged witnesses of it. These changes at times give rise to a feeling of insecurity. This is primarily due to precarious social and economic conditions and is exacerbated by a certain weakening in the perception of ethical principles on which the law and the personal moral attitudes are founded, that never fail to reinforce this system.

Our world, with all its new hopes and possibilities, is at the same time under the impression that moral consensus is lacking and, consequently, that the basic structures of coexistence can no longer function properly. The temptation to believe that forces mobilized for the defence of civil

society are doomed to failure is therefore surfacing in many people. In the face of this temptation, we Christians who are particularly responsible for rediscovering new determination in professing the faith and in doing good, to continue courageously to be close to people in their joys and sufferings, in both the happy and the darker hours of earthly life.

In our day great importance is given to the subjective dimension of life. This is good, moreover, since it enables us to make the human being the focus of consideration, both in thought and in historical action. However, it should never be forgotten that man finds his deepest dignity in God's loving gaze and in reference to him.

Attention to the subjective dimension is also a good when the value of the human conscience is highlighted. But here we encounter a serious risk because modern thought has developed a reductive view of the conscience. It maintains that there are no objective references for determining what is valid and what is true but that it is the individual person with his or her intuition who is the yardstick; each one, therefore, possesses his own truth, his own morality.

The most evident consequence is that religion and morality tend to be confined to the area of the subjective, the private: in other words faith, with its values and forms of behaviour, is no longer entitled to a place in public and civil life. If, therefore, on the one hand great importance is given to pluralism and tolerance in society, on the other, religion is tending to be gradually marginalized and perceived as unimportant and, in a certain sense, foreign to the civil world, as if its influence on human life should be limited.

On the contrary, for us Christians the true meaning of "conscience" is the human capacity for recognizing the truth and, primarily, the possibility of hearing its call, of seeking and finding it. It is necessary that human beings know how to open themselves, to be able to accept it freely and consciously. The human person, moreover, is the expression of a design of love and truth: God "planned" men and women with their interiority, their conscience, so that they might draw guidance from it in order to preserve and cultivate themselves and human society.

The new challenges that are looming on the horizon require God and the human being once again to encounter each other, they require society and public institutions to rediscover their "soul", their spiritual and moral roots, to give a new consistence to the ethical and juridical values of reference and hence to practical action.

May the Christian faith and the Church never cease to make their own contribution to promoting the common good and to an authentically human progress. The same service of religion and of spiritual assistance, which, by virtue of the legislation in force, the State and the Church also engage to provide for the personnel of the State Police, testifies to the perennial fruitfulness of this encounter.

Today the unique vocation of the city of Rome requires that you who are public officials set a good example of positive and fruitful interaction between a healthy secularity and the Christian faith. The efficacy of your service is in fact the result of the combination of professionalism and the human quality, with the updating of security means and systems and the collection of human gifts such as patience, perseverance in goodness, sacrifice and the willingness to listen.

All of this, properly harmonized, is directed to the benefit of citizens, especially people in difficulty. May you always be able to see the human person as your purpose so that all may live in an authentically human way. As the Bishop of this city of ours I would like to ask you to read and meditate upon the word of God, to find in it the source and the criterion that inspire your action.

Dear friends, when you are on duty in the streets of Rome, or in your offices, remember that your Bishop, the Pope, is praying for you and loves you! I thank you for your visit and entrust you all to the protection of Mary Most Holy and of St Michael the Archangel, your heavenly Protector, as I warmly impart to you and to your undertaking a special Apostolic Blessing.