



The Holy See

INAUGURATION OF THE EXHIBITION
"THE SPLENDOR OF TRUTH, THE BEAUTY OF LOVE"
TRIBUTE OF ARTISTS TO POPE BENEDICT XVI
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 60th ANNIVERSARY
OF HIS PRIESTLY ORDINATION"

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

*Atrium of the Paul VI Audience Hall
Monday, 4 July 2011*

*Your Eminences, Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Friends,*

It is a great joy for me to meet you and to receive your creative and multiform tribute on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of my ordination to the priesthood. I am sincerely grateful for your closeness on this anniversary, which is so significant and important to me. During the Eucharistic Celebration of 29 June, the Solemnity of Sts Peter and Paul, I thanked the Lord for the gift of my priestly vocation. Today, I thank you for the friendship and kindness which you have shown me. I cordially greet Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Dean of the College of Cardinals, Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, President of the Pontifical Council for Culture who, together with his colleagues, has organized this unique artistic exhibition and I thank him for his courteous words addressed to me. I also extend my greeting to everyone present, especially you, dear artists, who have accepted the invitation to present one of your creations in this Exhibition.

Our meeting today, at which I have the joy and the curiosity to admire your works, is meant as a new step in which a journey of friendship and dialogue that began on 21 November, 2009 in the Sistine Chapel; an event which I still hold dear in my heart. The Church and artists once again encounter each other, to speak together and sustain a conversation which should and must become ever more intense and articulate, so that it also may offer to culture, or rather the cultures

of our times, an eloquent example of fruitful and effective dialogue, aimed at making this, our world, more human and more beautiful. Today, you present me with the fruit of your creativity, of your reflection, of your talent, expressions of the various artistic environments which you represent: painting, sculpture, architecture, goldsmithery, cinema, music, literature and poetry. Before I admire them together with you, allow me to stop for a moment and reflect on the evocative title of this Exhibition: “Lo splendore della verità, la bellezza della carità” (“The Splendor of Truth, the Beauty of Love”). Precisely in the homily of the Mass *pro eligendo Pontifice*, I commented on the beautiful expression of St Paul in the Letter to the Ephesians, “*veritatem facientes in caritate*” (4:15), and I said that to “make truth in love” was a fundamental formula for Christian existence. I added, “Truth and love coincide in Christ. To the extent that we draw close to Christ, in our own lives too, truth and love are blended. Love without truth would be blind; truth without love would be like “a clanging cymbal” (I Cor 13:1). It is precisely from union, I would like to say from the symphony of perfect harmony between truth and love that an authentic beauty emanates, capable of eliciting admiration, wonder and true joy in human hearts. The world in which we live needs the truth to shine brightly and not to be obscured by lies or banality; it needs love that enflames and that is not overwhelmed by pride and egotism. We need the beauty of truth and love to strike us in the intimacy of our hearts and make us more human.

Dear friends, I wish to renew to you and all artists a friendly and passionate appeal: do not ever separate artistic creativity from truth and from love, do not ever search for beauty far from truth and love, but with the richness of your genius, of your creative leanings, be always, courageously, seekers of the truth and witnesses to love; let truth shine brightly in your works and make their beauty elicit in the gaze and in the hearts of those who admire them, the desire and need to make their existence beautiful and true, every existence, enriching it with that treasure which is never lacking, which makes life a work of art and every man an extraordinary artist: charity, love. May the Holy Spirit, author of every beauty that is in the world, always illuminate you and guide you towards the final and lasting Beauty, that which warms our minds and our hearts and for which we wait, one day, to be able to contemplate in all its splendour. Once again, thank you for your friendship, for your presence here and for bringing a ray of this Beauty, which is God, to the world. Truly from my heart, I impart to all of you and to your loved ones and to the entire world of art, my Apostolic Blessing.