



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO MEMBERS OF THE REGIONAL BOARD OF LAZIO,
THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF ROME AND
THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROVINCE OF ROME**

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 12 January 2012*

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Once again I have the joy of meeting you at the beginning of the New Year for the traditional exchange of greetings. I thank Hon. Ms. Renata Polverini, President of the Regional Board of Lazio; Hon. Mr Giovanni Alemanno, Mayor of Rome; and Hon. Mr Nicola Zingaretti, President of the Province of Rome, for their courteous words to me on behalf of all. I would like to express to you all my fervent good wishes for the new year, which I extend to the people of Rome and of Lazio, who are particularly close to me in my ministry as Bishop of Rome.

For several years now Lazio has also been suffering the effects of the economic and financial crisis that has hit various areas of the world and whose deepest roots, as I have had occasion to recall, lie in an ethical crisis. The etymology of the word “crisis” recalls the dimension of “separating” and, in a broad sense, of “evaluating” and “judging”. The current crisis may therefore also serve as an opportunity for the entire civil community to ascertain whether the values on which social life is founded have generated a more just, fair and supportive society or whether, on the contrary, profound rethinking is necessary in order to recover the values that are the basis of a true renewal of society and to encourage a recovery that is not solely financial but also seeks to promote the integral good of the human person.

In this context the Christian community is involved in a ceaseless task of education, particularly for the new generations, to ensure that the values which have made Rome and its territory a beacon for the world for centuries are adopted in a renewed form as the basis of a better future for all.

It is important that a renewed humanism be developed, in which the human identity equates with the category of person. The current crisis, in fact, is also rooted in individualism which obscures people's relational dimension and leads them to withdraw in their own small world, concerned primarily with satisfying their own needs and desires, with scant consideration for others. Are not speculation in leases, the increasingly difficult integration of young people in the labour market, the loneliness of so many of the elderly, the anonymity which often characterizes life in the neighbourhoods of the city and the at times superficial view of situations of marginalization and poverty a consequence of this mindset?

Faith tells us that the human person is a being called to live in relationships; that the "I" can find itself precisely by approaching a "you" who accepts and loves him or her. This "You" is first and foremost God, the only One who can give the human being unconditional acceptance and infinite love; and it is also others, starting with those who are closest. Rediscovering this relational dimension as a constitutive element of one's existence is the first step to bringing a more human society into being. Moreover it is also the task of institutions to foster the growth of the awareness that we are part of one reality in which each one, like the parts of the human body, is important to the whole, as Menenius Agrippa said in his famous apology recorded by Titus Livius [Livy] in his *History of Rome* (cf. *Ab Urbe Condita*, II, 32).

The awareness of being one "body" will increase if the value of acceptance — already deeply rooted in the hearts of the inhabitants of Rome and of Lazio — is consolidated. We had recent proof of this in the days of the [Beatification of John Paul II](#): thousands of pilgrims who came to the City were able to live peaceful and brotherly days, thanks too to your invaluable collaboration. May the diocesan *Caritas* and the Christian communities spare no effort in this task of welcoming especially those, coming from countries in which poverty may often be the cause of death, or fleeing from them in order to ensure their own safety, who arrive in our cities and knock at parish doors. However, it is necessary to encourage the process of full integration that leads to insertion in the social fabric so that they may offer to all the riches that they bear. In this way each one will learn to view the place in which he or she lives as a "common home" in which to dwell and to care for, in the conscious and necessary respect for the laws that regulate community life.

Together with acceptance, the value of solidarity must be strengthened. It is a requirement of charity and justice with which, in difficult moments, those who have greater assets take care of those who are living in needier circumstances. Then, it is the task of institutions always to give attention and support to the realities on which the good of society depends. In this regard, special support must be guaranteed to families — particularly if they are numerous — which often have to face difficulties which the lack or insufficiency of work sometimes makes more acute.

I encourage you to defend the family founded on marriage as an essential cell of society, also through aid and fiscal facilitation that encourage births. I likewise encourage you to do your utmost to ensure that all family nuclei are guaranteed the necessary conditions for a dignified life.

Solidarity must then be shown to young people, the most heavily penalized by the lack of employment. A supportive society must always have at heart the future of the new generations, providing adequate policies that guarantee housing at fair prices, and do everything possible to guarantee some form of work. All this is important in order to avoid the risk that young people fall prey to illegal organizations that offer easy earnings and do not respect the value of human life.

At the same time — the third point — it is necessary to promote a culture of legality, helping citizens to realize that laws serve to channel the many positive energies present in society and hence permit the promotion of the common good. The recent episodes of violence in the territory are an incentive to continue in the commitment to inculcate respect for the law and to safeguard security. The institutions, in addition to being exemplary in their respect for the law, are entrusted with the task of bringing into force just and fair measures which also take into account the law that God has inscribed on the human heart and that can be recognized by all through reason.

Distinguished Authorities, the challenges are numerous and complex. It is only possible to get the better of them to the extent that the knowledge that each person's destiny is linked to the destiny of all is strengthened. And this is why I wished to emphasize that acceptance, solidarity and legality constitute the fundamental values to face the year that has just begun with greater serenity. I assure you of my constant prayers for your work on behalf of society and I entrust you to the motherly intercession of the Virgin Mary. With these wishes, I warmly impart to you all my Apostolic Blessing which I gladly extend to the inhabitants of Rome, of its Province and of the entire Region.