



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION "JESUS, OUR CONTEMPORARY"
[ROME, 9-11 FEBRUARY 2012]**

*To My Venerable Brother
Cardinal ANGELO BAGNASCO
Metropolitan Archbishop of Genoa
President of the Italian Episcopal Conference*

On the occasion of the International Convention "Jesus, Our Contemporary", which is taking place in Rome from 9 to 11 February 2012 at the initiative of the Italian Episcopal Conference's Committee for the Cultural Project, I address a cordial greeting to you, Venerable Brother, to the Cardinals and Bishops present, to the Relators, to the organizers and to all those who are taking part in such an important event.

I am very glad and grateful for the opportunity to dedicate to the Person of Jesus a few days of close interdisciplinary study with a cultural approach, destined to have an impact on the Italian ecclesial and social communities. Many signs, in fact, reveal that the Name and message of Jesus of Nazareth, despite such disoriented and rapid times, frequently spark interest and exert a strong attraction, even on those who do not succeed in adhering to his word of salvation. We are therefore impelled to evoke an increasingly profound and thorough understanding, in ourselves and everywhere, of the real figure of Jesus Christ. This can only spring from the hermeneutic of faith placed in a fruitful relationship with historical reason. It was for this purpose that I wrote my two books on Jesus of Nazareth.

It is indeed significant that in elaborating the culture of the Christian community, a topic should have been chosen that cannot be considered an exclusive object of the sacred disciplines as is clearly shown by the vast range of the abilities and the plurality of the voices called to attend the Convention. The evangelization of culture, to which the Cultural Project of the Italian Episcopal Conference aspires, is based on the conviction that the life of a person and of a people can be enlivened and transformed by the Gospel in all its dimensions, in order fully to achieve its purpose

and its truth.

On several occasions in the course of my Pontificate, I have recalled the need to give priority to opening a pathway to God in human hearts and lives. “With him or without him everything changes”, the incisive title of the previous Convention of the Committee for the Cultural Project incisively affirmed. We cannot entrust our lives to an indefinite superior body or to a cosmic force, but to God whose Face as Father has been made familiar by the Son, “full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14).

Jesus is the key that opens the door of wisdom and love to us, that dispels our loneliness and keeps hope alive in the face of the mystery of evil and death. The life of Jesus of Nazareth, in whose Name many believers in various countries of the world still today face suffering and persecution, cannot, therefore, be confined to a distant past but is crucial to our faith today.

What does it mean to say that Jesus of Nazareth, who lived between Galilee and Judaea 2,000 years ago, is a “contemporary” of every man and woman alive today, and in every epoch? Romano Guardini explains it to us in words that remain as timely as when they were written: “His earthly life entered into eternity and in this way is related to every hour of earthly time, redeemed by his sacrifice.... An ineffable mystery is brought about in the believer: Christ who is ‘above’, ‘seated at the right hand of God’ (Col 3:1), is also ‘in’ this man, with the fullness of his redemption, for in every Christian the life of Christ is brought about once again: his growth, his maturity, his Passion, death and resurrection, which constitute true life” (*Il testamento di Gesù*, Milan 1993, p. 141).

Jesus entered human history for ever and lives on in it with his beauty and power, in that frail body — ever in need of purification but also infinitely full of divine love — which is the Church. To him she turns in the Liturgy, to praise him and to receive authentic life.

The contemporaneity of Jesus is revealed in a special way in the Eucharist, in which he is present with his passion, death and Resurrection. It is this that makes the Church contemporaneous with every human being, capable of embracing all people and all epochs because she is guided by the Holy Spirit in order to perpetuate the work of Jesus in history.

In entrusting these thoughts to you, Venerable Brother, I warmly send you and all the participants in the Convention my cordial greeting, together with my good wishes for its success. I accompany your work with prayer and with my Apostolic Blessing, to favour an ever closer communion with Jesus and with the Father who sent him to us.

From the Vatican, 9 February 2012

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