



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI TO ITALIAN CHRISTIAN EXECUTIVES (U.C.I.D.)

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Saturday, 4 March 2006*

*Your Eminence,
Dear Friends of the Christian Union of Business Executives,*

I am pleased to welcome you and to address my cordial greeting to each one of you. A special thought goes to Cardinal Ennio Antonelli who has interpreted your common sentiments. I thank him for his address, and I am also grateful to the President of the UCID for courteously introducing our meeting and presenting the ideals and style of your commitment, as individuals and as an association.

I am particularly impressed by your determination to aspire to an ethic that goes beyond mere professional deontology - even if, in the current context this would be quite something. It made me think of the relationship between justice and charity, to which I dedicated a specific reflection in the second part of the Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (nn. 26-29).

Christians are called to seek justice always, but possess an inner impulse to love that goes beyond justice itself. The journey of lay Christians, from the mid-19th century to today, has brought them to the awareness that charitable acts must not replace the commitment to social justice.

The Church's social doctrine and especially the action of so many groups of Christian inspiration, such as yours, demonstrate the great progress the Ecclesial Community has made in this area.

In recent times, also thanks to the Magisterium and to the witness of the Roman Pontiffs, and in particular, that of beloved Pope John Paul II, it has become clearer to all of us that justice and charity are the two inseparable aspects of the single social commitment of Christians.

It is incumbent on lay faithful in particular to work for a just order in society, taking part in public life in the first person, cooperating with other citizens and fulfilling their own responsibility (cf. *Deus Caritas Est*, n. 29).

In doing just this, they are motivated by "social charity" which makes them attentive to people as individuals, to situations of greater difficulty and loneliness, and to needs that are not only material (cf. *ibid.*, n. 28b).

Thanks to the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, two years ago the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* was published. It is an especially useful instrument of formation for all who wish to be guided by the Gospel in their work and professional activity.

I am sure that you too have made it the object of attentive examination, and I hope that for each one of you and for the local branches of the UCID it will become a constant reference point in examining issues, working out projects and seeking solutions for the complex problems of the world of work and of the economy.

Indeed, it is precisely in this sphere that you carry out an indispensable part of your mission as lay Christians, and consequently, part of the process of your sanctification.

I was also interested to see the "Charter of values" of the young members of the UCID and I congratulate you on the positive spirit and confidence in the human person that enlivens it. To each "I believe" it adds an "I commit myself", thereby focusing on the coherence between strong conviction and the consequent active effort.

In particular, I appreciated the resolution to value every person for what he or she is and can give according to one's talents, avoiding every form of exploitation; I also appreciated the recognition of the importance of the family and of personal responsibility.

Unfortunately, partly because of current economic difficulties, these values often run the risk of not being followed by those business persons who lack a sound moral inspiration. Therefore, the contribution of those who draw from their Christian formation is indispensable, and thus should not be taken for granted but always nourished and renewed.

Dear friends, in a few days' time, we will be celebrating the solemnity of St Joseph, Patron of Workers. There is no doubt that throughout its history your Association has always had a veneration for St Joseph.

For my part I, who bear his name, am pleased today to be able to point him out to you not only as a heavenly Protector and Intercessor for every worthwhile initiative, but first and foremost as one to whom you can confide your prayer and your ordinary commitment, which are surely marked

both by satisfactions and disappointments in your daily life and, I would say, tenacious search for God's justice in human affairs.

St Joseph himself will help you put into practice Jesus' demanding exhortation: "Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness" (cf. Mt 6: 33).

May the Virgin Mary also always help you, together with the great witnesses of social charity who have spread the Gospel of charity with their teaching and action.

Lastly, may you be accompanied by the Apostolic Blessing, which I cordially impart to you who are present here and gladly extend to all the members and to your relatives.

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