



# The Holy See

---

## APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO CYPRUS

(JUNE 4-6, 2010)

### MEETING WITH THE CIVIL AUTHORITIES AND DIPLOMATIC CORPS

#### *ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI*

*Presidential Palace Gardens in Nicosia*

*Saturday, 5 June 2010*

(Video)

*Mr President,  
Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I am grateful that, as part of my [Apostolic Journey to Cyprus](#), I have this opportunity to meet with the political and civil authorities of the Republic, as well as the members of the diplomatic community. I thank President Christofias for the gracious words of greeting which he expressed in your name and I willingly reciprocate with my own respectful good wishes for your important work, recalling in particular the happy occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Republic's Constitution.

I have just laid a wreath at the memorial of the late Archbishop Makarios, the first President of the Republic of Cyprus. Like him, each of you in your lives of public service must be committed to serving the good of others in society, whether at the local, national or international level. This is a noble vocation which the Church esteems. When carried out faithfully, public service enables us to grow in wisdom, integrity and personal fulfilment. Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics gave great importance to such fulfilment – *eudemonia* - as a goal for every human being, and saw in moral character the way to reach that goal. For them, and for the great Islamic and Christian philosophers who followed in their footsteps, the practice of virtue consisted in acting in accordance with right reason, in the pursuit of all that is true, good and beautiful.

From a religious perspective, we are members of a single human family created by God and we are called to foster unity and to build a more just and fraternal world based on lasting values. In so far as we fulfil our duty, serve others and adhere to what is right, our minds become more open to deeper truths and our freedom grows strong in its allegiance to what is good. My predecessor Pope John Paul II once wrote that moral obligation should not be seen as a law imposing itself from without and demanding obedience, but rather as an expression of God's own wisdom to which human freedom readily submits (cf. *Veritatis Splendor*, 41). As human beings we find our ultimate fulfilment in reference to that Absolute Reality whose reflection is so often encountered in our conscience as a pressing invitation to serve truth, justice and love.

At a personal level, you as public servants know the importance of truth, integrity and respect in your relationships with others. Personal relationships are often the first steps towards building trust and – in due course – solid bonds of friendship between individuals, peoples and nations. This is an essential part of your role, both as politicians and diplomats. In countries with delicate political situations, such honest and open personal relationships can be the beginning of a much greater good for entire societies and peoples. Let me encourage all of you, present here today, to seize the opportunities afforded you, both personally and institutionally, to build these relationships and, in so doing, to foster the greater good of the concert of nations and the true good of those whom you represent.

The ancient Greek philosophers also teach us that the common good is served precisely by the influence of people endowed with clear moral insight and courage. In this way, policies become purified of selfish interests or partisan pressures and are placed on a more solid basis. Furthermore, the legitimate aspirations of those whom we represent are protected and fostered. Moral rectitude and impartial respect for others and their well-being are essential to the good of any society since they establish a climate of trust in which all human interactions, whether religious, or economic, social and cultural, or civil and political, acquire strength and substance.

But what does it mean in practical terms to respect and promote moral truth in the world of politics and diplomacy on the national and international levels? How can the pursuit of truth bring greater harmony to the troubled regions of the earth? I would suggest that it can be done in three ways.

Firstly, promoting moral truth means acting responsibly on the basis of factual knowledge. As diplomats, you know from experience that such knowledge helps you identify injustices and grievances, so as to consider dispassionately the concerns of all involved in a given dispute. When parties rise above their own particular view of events, they acquire an objective and comprehensive vision. Those who are called to resolve such disputes are able to make just decisions and promote genuine reconciliation when they grasp and acknowledge the full truth of a specific question.

A second way of promoting moral truth consists in deconstructing political ideologies which would

supplant the truth. The tragic experiences of the twentieth century have laid bare the inhumanity which follows from the suppression of truth and human dignity. In our own day, we are witnessing attempts to promote supposed values under the guise of peace, development and human rights. In this sense, speaking to the United Nations General Assembly, I called attention to attempts in some quarters to reinterpret the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by giving satisfaction to particular interests which would compromise the Declaration's inner unity and move away from its original intent (cf. *Address to the United Nations General Assembly*, 18 April 2008).

Thirdly, promoting moral truth in public life calls for a constant effort to base positive law upon the ethical principles of natural law. An appeal to the latter was once considered self-evident, but the tide of positivism in contemporary legal theory requires the restatement of this important axiom. Individuals, communities and states, without guidance from objectively moral truths, would become selfish and unscrupulous and the world a more dangerous place to live. On the other hand, by being respectful of the rights of persons and peoples we protect and promote human dignity. When the policies we support are enacted in harmony with the natural law proper to our common humanity, then our actions become more sound and conducive to an environment of understanding, justice and peace.

Mr President, distinguished friends, with these considerations I reaffirm my esteem and that of the Church for your important service to society and to the building of a secure future for our world. I invoke upon all of you the divine blessings of wisdom, strength and perseverance in the fulfilment of your duties. Thank you.

© Copyright 2010 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

---

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana