



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE MEETING
OF THE DEVELOPMENT BANK OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE***

Clementine Hall

Friday, 12 June 2010

Mr Governor

Mr Presidents,

Your Excellencies,

Dear Administrators,

Dear friends,

The 45th Joint Meeting of the Development Bank of the Council of Europe has brought you to Rome and I have the pleasure of receiving you this morning in the Apostolic Palace at the end of your gathering.

I thank you, Mr Governor, for your words stressing the importance the Holy See gives to the Development Bank of the Council of Europe of which it has been a member since 1973. In 1956 the Council of Europe founded a bank with an exclusively social vocation in order to have a qualified instrument to promote its policy of solidarity. From the outset this bank was concerned with problems associated with refugees and then extended its province to include the whole area of social coherence. The Holy See cannot but look with interest at a structure that supports social projects with its loans, is concerned with development, responds to emergency situations and wishes to contribute to the improvement of the living conditions of people in need.

The political events that occurred in Europe at the end of the last century have enabled it at last to breathe with both its lungs, to borrow the expression of my Venerable Predecessor. We all know that there is still a long way to go in order to make this reality effective. The economic and financial exchanges between the European East and West have indeed developed but has there been real

human progress?

Has not the liberation from totalitarian ideologies been used unilaterally for economic progress alone, to the detriment of a more human development respecting the dignity and nobility of the human being? And has it not sometimes ignored the spiritual riches that have shaped the European identity? I am sure that the Bank's interventions on behalf of the countries of Eastern, Central and South-Eastern Europe will have made it possible to correct imbalances, to promote a process based on justice and solidarity that are indispensable for the present and future of Europe.

You know, as I do, that today the world and Europe are going through a particularly serious economic and financial crisis. This period must not lead to limitations that are based only on a strictly financial analysis. On the contrary, it should permit the Development Bank to show its originality by reinforcing social integration, management of the environment and the development of public infrastructures with a social mission. I warmly encourage the Bank's work in this perspective and in that of solidarity. It will thus be faithful to its vocation.

In the face of the current challenges that the world and Europe must manage, I sought to draw attention in my latest Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* to the Social Doctrine of the Church and its positive contribution to building up the human person and society. The Church, in Christ's footsteps, sees love for God and for one's neighbour as a powerful motor able to offer an authentic energy that can feed the whole of the social, juridical, cultural, political and economic environment. I desired to stress that if it is lived correctly the existing relationship between love and truth is a dynamic force that regenerates interpersonal relations in their entirety and offers a real innovation in the reorientation of economic and financial life which it renews, at the service of man and his dignity for which they exist. The economy and finance do not exist for their own sake, they are only an instrument or means. Their sole end is the human person and his or her total fulfilment in dignity. This is the only capital it is right to safeguard. And it is in this capital that the spiritual dimension of the human person is found. Christianity has enabled Europe to understand what the freedom, responsibility and ethics that imbue its laws and social structures actually are. To marginalize Christianity also by the exclusion of the symbols that express it would lead to cutting our continent off from the fundamental source that ceaselessly nourishes it and contributes to its true identity. Effectively, Christianity is the source of "spiritual and moral values that are the common patrimony of the European peoples", values to which the Member States of the Council of Europe have shown their undying attachment in the Preamble to the Statutes of the Council of Europe. This attachment, which was further reaffirmed in the Warsaw Declaration of 2005, establishes and guarantees the vitality of the principles on which European political and social life are founded and, in particular, the activity of the Council of Europe.

In this context, the Development Bank is of course a financial establishment, hence an economic tool. However, its creation was desired as a response to needs that exceed the financial and

economic sector.

Its reason for existing is social. Therefore it is called to be fully what it was intended that it should be: a technical instrument that makes solidarity possible. Solidarity must be lived in brotherhood.

Brotherhood is generous, makes no calculations. It might perhaps be necessary to apply these criteria better in the Bank's internal decisions and in its external action. Brotherhood creates spaces for giving freely, which although they are indispensable are hard to envisage or to manage when the only goal is efficiency and profit. Moreover we all know that this dualism is not an absolute, insurmountable determinism for it can be overcome. To do this the innovation would be to introduce a logic that would make the human person, and more particularly families and those who are in serious need, the centre and goal of the economy.

Europe has a rich past that has seen the development of economic experiences based on brotherhood. There are enterprises that have a social or mutualistic end. They have had to conform to the laws of the market but they wish to rediscover the power of the generosity of their origins. It also seems to me that in order really to live solidarity, the Development Bank of the Council of Europe wishes to correspond to the ideal of brotherhood that I have just mentioned and to explore the areas where brotherhood and the logic of giving can be expressed. These are ideals that have Christian roots and, together with the desire for peace, presided at the birth of the Council of Europe.

The medal you have just presented to me, Mr Governor, and for which I thank you, will enable me to remember this meeting. Dear friends, I assure you of my prayers and I encourage you to pursue your work with courage and clarity in order to carry out the important duty that has been entrusted to you: to contribute to good in our beloved Europe.

God bless you all. Many thanks.

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