



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO MAYOR AND ADMINISTRATORS OF ROME**

Thursday, 30 January 1997

*Your Honour,
Representatives of the Capitoline Administration,*

1. I welcome you with joy and extend a cordial welcome to each of you. I address a particular greeting to the mayor, expressing my warm gratitude for his courteous address. With him, I would like to greet the board, the councillors and all who daily serve the citizens of Rome in the various departments of the Capitoline Administration. This is often a hidden work requiring dedication, willingness and competence; a work on which the quality of life in our city to a large extent depends.

At the beginning of the new year, this traditional meeting offers the Bishop of Rome and the city's administrators the opportunity to express their common commitment to Rome, and to reflect together on its *historical calling* and all that is necessary to achieve it.

2. It is only three years until the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, a date when Christians will commemorate the 20 centuries since the birth of Jesus Christ. The Church and civil community of Rome are called to play an important role in this event. The common conviction is that it will put our city, perhaps as never before, at the centre of the world's attention, giving an even more concrete expression to the name *Caput mundi*, which it is commonly called. Thus it is vital to call on the best spiritual and physical energies of the urban community so that, when the Jubilee is reached, it can show its most authentic face to the many pilgrims who will visit it: the Rome famous not only for its truly Christian dimension, but also for its traditional hospitality and for the awareness of the universal role it has been given by history.

3. To help achieve these objectives, I announced the *great city mission*, which began in St Peter's Square on the last Vigil of Pentecost and is becoming more and more a part of the city's human fabric.

With renewed vigour the Church wishes to present to every Christian living in Rome and to all its citizens *the message of salvation* which is incarnate in the person, words and deeds of Jesus Christ. As a symbol of this commitment, in the coming months each Roman family will be given a copy of Mark's Gospel, written precisely in Rome by the disciple and faithful interpreter of Peter, the Apostle who shed his blood here. Today I am pleased to give you a copy too, convinced that the "joyful proclamation of Jesus Christ" is that wisdom of life which is also helpful to the civil life of all who reside in the city.

To support and complete her missionary proclamation, the Church perseveres in her commitment to *human advancement* and service to the needy. Through the diocesan Caritas and the many Church structures in the area, she continues to attend to the countless material and moral needs of many of its citizens, the victims of old and new forms of poverty. She is also involved in providing many suburban parishes with suitable places for worship and community life, which will be beacons of faith and hospitality in the new neighbourhoods as well as sources of identity and cultural outposts.

The ecclesial community is also preparing to *offer the appropriate hospitality* to all those who will be arriving for the forthcoming Jubilee, a highly important spiritual event whose success demands from both individuals and communities a commitment of sincere conversion.

As a public event, the Jubilee requires the creation of the structural, environmental and moral conditions which make special demands on the city's administrators. I gladly take this opportunity *to thank each of you* for what you have been doing to resolve the problems of circulation, traffic, parking, hospitality structures and the environment. My cordial wish is that all this will always take place with full respect for the properly religious objectives of the Jubilee.

Every effort therefore must continue to be made so that the expectations for the Holy Year of the Church, the Roman people and the international community will be fulfilled, and the city may present itself at this historical event materially and spiritually renewed.

4. This is an ambitious objective which demands even greater efforts to resolve the ancient and new infirmities of Rome. First to be dealt with must be the *economic stagnation* which has affected urban life for some years and is becoming visible in the decline of certain important productive sectors and the worrisome decrease in the number of jobs.

This situation is a heavy burden particularly for families. *Unemployment* is a problem that deserves absolute priority in the commitment of public administrators, from whom the people expect

concrete interventions to create new job opportunities, especially for those who have a family to support or are about to form one. Obviously, the welfare of families does not only depend on an improved standard of living. As we learn from the history of many peoples, it is only by harmoniously combining *material* and *moral* well-being that we can reach the lofty goals of civilization.

Serious and surprising episodes of violence, which have not spared members of the clergy actively involved in serving their brothers and sisters, are symptoms not only of the lack of security in which many citizens live, but also of the *absence of values* that makes civil co-existence difficult.

5. Awareness of these situations cannot fail to spur municipal administrators to spare no effort in making city neighbourhoods safer and more liveable. Nonetheless, there is a risk that if the defence of the public order is isolated from adequate *personal formation* and ethical development, it will not achieve lasting success. Therefore broad, joint co-operation is necessary to promote concrete initiatives in defense and support of the values and institutions on which society is based, starting with the family founded on marriage. It is essential to resist those tendencies which, hiding behind a false idea of freedom, seek to introduce an undue extension of the concept of family into legislative and administrative regulations, or a mistaken equality with other states of life that are not only morally but also socially unstable.

With regard to family policy, then, as to leisure time, formation and solidarity, attention must be paid to the *world of young people*, pointing out to the new generations and giving them witness of high human and spiritual ideals, such as altruism, respect for the truth and the fostering of authentic love. We must consistently and courageously denounce the *ambivalent attitudes* of those, for example, who express concern for the situation of young people, but in fact support permissive behaviour devoid of genuine moral sense.

To intervene in so many situations of marginalization and degradation present in Rome is not easy, and your willingness frequently encounters obstacles and resistance, which do not make the desired solutions practicable. You must not lose heart but redouble your efforts to heal the wounds that are still gaping in urban life through organized intervention and a vast work of sensitization.

6. Mr Mayor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, in biblical tradition, the Jubilee, “the year of the Lord’s favour”, urges us to consider our relationship with people in a new way and to become responsible for the duty of re-establishing God’s justice in the situations of sin and slavery present in society (cf. *Tertio millennio adveniente*, nn. 14-15).

At the beginning of 1997, the first year of immediate preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, I wished to submit to the attention of each one of you certain problems which I have experienced first-hand during my parish visits, at pastoral meetings and through the numerous appeals I receive from the Roman faithful. These suggestions are an invitation to carry out in the

city of Rome the plan of justice which the Lord entrusts to the men and women of our time through the grace of the Jubilee.

I commend to the Mother of the Lord and to the Apostles Peter and Paul the plans being made by this administration in service to the common good, as I cordially impart a special Apostolic Blessing to each of you present here, to your families and to the beloved city of Rome.

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