



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE VATICAN'S PUBLIC SECURITY FORCE***

*Clementine Hall
Saturday, 14 January 2006*

*Dear Prefect,
Dear Commissioner,
Dear Officer in Charge,
Dear Officers and Agents,*

Your meeting with the Pope which takes place every year has become a beautiful tradition. Dear friends, your dedicated and professional service guarantees safety for pilgrims in St Peter's Square and in the area surrounding the Vatican.

Today's meeting is also an appropriate opportunity to exchange cordial and fervent good wishes at the beginning of the New Year, which I hope will be serene and prosperous for everyone.

I have the joy of receiving you for the first time as Successor of the Apostle Peter, although I have had the opportunity in the past to meet you almost every day in the Square, or nearby, and was always able to see for myself how meritorious your difficult work is.

I therefore address my sincere welcome and greeting to each one of you with affection, and willingly extend it to your respective families and all your loved ones. In particular, I would like to greet your General Commissioner, Dr Vincenzo Caso, who has headed the Inspectorate for just a few months. I thank him for his courteous words on behalf of those present and all members of your special working community. I would also like to address a respectful greeting to Prefect Salvatore Festa.

You are guards of order and security: a task that requires technical and professional training combined with great patience, constant watchfulness, courtesy and a spirit of sacrifice.

All those who work in the various offices of the Holy See, the pilgrims and tourists who come to meet the Pope or to pray in St Peter's, know that they can count on your discreet and efficient assistance. You are silent and vigilant "guardian angels" for them, who keep watch day and night over the area.

How can we forget, for example, the tremendous effort made by your Inspectorate and by the Police, with the support of various elements of the Italian Army and other bodies during the demanding days of the sickness, death and funeral of beloved Pope John Paul II? You were equally efficient on the occasion of my election to the Chair of Peter.

I make the most of today's meeting to renew my warmest thanks and those of my collaborators to all who contributed on those historic occasions to keep everything running smoothly; the whole world was able to admire how efficiently you organized everything.

This leads us to consider how important it is to always work in harmony and with sincere cooperation on the part of all. Families, communities, various organizations, nations and the world itself would be all the better if, as in any healthy and well-structured body, each member were to carry out his or her specific task conscientiously and altruistically, however small or great it might be.

Dear friends, let us open our hearts to Christ and welcome with trust his Gospel, a precious rule of life for those in search of the true meaning of human existence. Let us ask the Virgin Mary for help so that, as a caring Mother, she may protect each one of you, your families and your work, and watch over Italy in the year 2006 that has just begun.

With these sentiments, I invoke upon you and upon your loved ones an abundance of heavenly gifts, as I warmly impart a special Apostolic Blessing to each one of you.

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