



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE DELEGATES OF THE ACADEMY OF MORAL
AND POLITICAL SCIENCES OF PARIS***

Saturday, 10 February 2007

*Mr Permanent Secretary,
Your Eminence,
Dear Academic Friends,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

With pleasure, I welcome you today, members of the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences. First, I thank Mr Michel Albert, Permanent Secretary, for the words with which he has expressed your delegation's sentiments, and also for the medal that recalls my entry as a Foreign Associate Member of your noble Institution.

The Academy of Moral and Political Sciences is a place of exchange and debate, which proposes reflections to help all citizens and legislators to "find the forms of political organization most favourable to the public good and to the development of the individual".

In fact, the reflections and actions of the Authorities and of the citizens must be centred on two elements: respect for each human being and the quest for the common good.

In today's world it is more than ever urgent to invite our contemporaries to a renewed attention to these two elements. In effect, the development of subjectivism, which makes each one tend to consider himself as the only point of reference and to hold that what he thinks has the character of truth, exhorts us to form consciences on fundamental values that cannot be mocked without putting man and society itself in danger, and upon the objective criteria of a decision that presupposes an act of reason.

As I emphasized during my Conference on The New Covenant held before your Academy in 1995,

the human person is "constitutively a being in relationship", called to consider himself ever more responsible to his brothers and sisters in humanity.

The question asked by God from the very first text of Scripture must resound constantly in the heart of everyone: "What have you done [for]... your brother?".

The sense of fraternity and solidarity and the sense of the common good are founded on the vigilant respect of one's brethren and on the organization of society, granting a place to everyone so that they can live in dignity, have a roof and what is necessary for their own existence and for that of the family for which they are responsible.

It is in this spirit that one must understand the motion that you approved last October regarding the rights of man and freedom of expression, which are part of the fundamental rights, being careful never to mock the fundamental dignity of the person and of human groups and to respect their religious beliefs.

Allow me to recall to your attention the figure of Andreï Dimitrijevitsh Sakharov, whom I succeeded in the Academy. This outstanding personality reminds us that it is necessary, in private and public life, to have the courage to say the truth and to follow it, to be free with respect to the surrounding world that often tends to impose its viewpoint and the behaviour to adopt.

True freedom consists in proceeding along the way of truth according to one's vocation, knowing that each person must render an account of his own life to his Creator and Saviour.

It is important that we know how to propose to youth a similar path, reminding them that true development is not at whatever cost, and inviting them not to be content to follow every trend presented to them. Hence, they will be able to discern with courage and tenacity the way of freedom and happiness, which presupposes fulfilling a certain number of requirements made with effort, sacrifice and the necessary renunciation so as to act well.

One of the challenges for our contemporaries, and in particular for youth, consists in not accepting to live merely in exteriority, in appearance, but in the development of the interior life, the unifying environment of being and acting, the place of recognizing our dignity as sons and daughters of God called to freedom, not separating ourselves from the font of life but remaining connected to it.

What gladdens man's heart is the recognition of being a son or daughter of God; it is a beautiful and good life under the gaze of God, as are also the victories obtained over evil and against deceit. By permitting each person to discover that life has a sense and that he or she is responsible for it, we open the way to a maturation of the person and to a reconciled humanity that seeks the common good.

The Russian intellectual Sakharov is an example of this; while his exterior freedom was obstructed during the Communist period, his interior freedom, which no one could touch, authorized him to speak out firmly in defence of his compatriots in the name of the common good.

It is important also today that man does not allow himself to be hampered by exterior chains such as relativism, the search for power and profit at any cost, drugs, disordered relationships, confusion in regard to matrimony and the non-recognition of the human person in all phases of his or her existence from conception to its natural end, which suggests that there can be periods when the human being would not really exist.

We must have the courage to remind our contemporaries what man is and what humanity is. I invite the civil Authorities and the people with a role in the transmission of values to always uphold the truth about man.

At the conclusion of our meeting, permit me to hope that through your works, the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences, together with other institutions, can always help people to build a better life and to build up a society where it is beautiful to live as brothers and sisters. This is the wish, united to prayer, that I raise to the Lord for you, your families and all the members of the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences.

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