



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO MEMBERS of the Regional Board and Council
of the Lazio region**

Saturday, 15 February 1997

*Mr President of the Regional Board,
Mr President of the Regional Council,
Distinguished Members of the Board and Council,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

1. I am pleased to meet you and offer you my best wishes for a 1997 full of satisfaction and success. I willingly extend them to your families and to all the citizens of the Lazio region.

I cordially greet each one of you, starting with the President of the Board, whom I thank for his words conveying your cordial sentiments and explaining the Regional Administration's plans.

The Church's gaze, as the President himself has pointed out, is turned to the Year 2000, which is a highly significant date, a Holy Year of special importance for many of our contemporaries. Indeed, as I wrote in the Apostolic Letter *Tertio millennio adveniente*, "the 2,000 years which have passed since the Birth of Christ ... represent an extraordinarily great Jubilee, not only for Christians but indirectly for the whole of humanity, given the prominent role played by Christianity during these two millennia" (n. 15).

In preparation for the Holy Year, the Diocese of Rome has announced a "city mission". Its plans include the distribution in the days ahead of Mark's Gospel to all the city's families. I am therefore pleased to present it today to you, as a testimony of the "Good News" of Jesus Christ, Son of God, the one Saviour of the world.

2. Today's meeting affords a new opportunity *to compare and harmonize the objectives* of the ecclesial community and of the Regional Administration of Lazio *in the perspective of this event*.

It is well known that the city of Rome is, as it were, the Holy Year's pole of attraction, in happy correlation with Jerusalem. However the role which the Regional Administration is called to play acquires great importance from many points of view in preparing for it and in carrying it out. A pilgrimage is, by its nature, a twofold experience: *spiritual*, in view of its deep, strong religious motives, and *practical*, as a result of its concrete activities such as the journey, the stops, the visits, the traveling and the meetings. The Lazio region is the actual area in which the pilgrimage's destination is located, the city of Rome: an area rich in places of high spiritual and cultural value, and closely linked to other centres of deep significance for pilgrims, in Lazio and in the other Italian regions.

All this invites the administrators to put promptly and imaginatively into practice appropriate legislation and business initiatives in order *to make the very most of the various resources* the regional territory possesses. These are truly considerable: one need only think of the remarkable physical and intellectual potential which the region's inhabitants represent; of the exceptional cultural heritage variously distributed in it; of the development of structures for hospitality, both lay and religious. I warmly hope that the Regional Administration and the ecclesial community will recognize and co-ordinate their respective responsibilities in a spirit of great collaboration, in order to create a hospitable and efficient environment in the vicinity of Rome.

3. However, the "extraordinary character" of the forthcoming Jubilee must not let us forget the "ordinary" problems of the area and of the people who live in it. The impact of the Jubilee on society demands that these problems be resolutely faced for a meaningful celebration of "the year of the Lord's grace".

Among the social issues that call for daily attention, that of *employment*, connected with the *occupational crisis* which is especially humiliating for the younger generation, stands out. The Regional Administration is invested with specific competence and responsibility in this area, which allow it to plan and carry out particular interventions to support the educational institutions that prepare young people to succeed in finding a place in the labour market.

While dwelling on the gravity of the *phenomenon of unemployment*, I would nonetheless like to address a warm invitation to everyone not to lose heart over its worrying persistence, but rather to redouble every effort to bring about an adequate solution. This solution depends of course on everyone's co-operation and on broad policies. However it is vital in this vast endeavour of society as a whole that your efforts, as regional administrators, should not be lacking. I pray the Lord that your contribution in this regard may be effective, so as to permit Lazio's young people and families to look to the future with renewed hope.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, from work, our gaze extends to the other great tasks incumbent on the Regional Administration, such as *health-care policies* and those *of the land and the environment*. You know well how the Church is concerned with these issues that directly affect people's quality of life. They deserve the ever more attentive and courageous consideration of the public administrators and a strong capacity for planning in close co-operation with all the forces present in the territory.

Much is already being done on these lines; but much still remains to be done, with the combined efforts of all. In particular, the commitment to the social progress of the various Lazio communities must include a firm ethical foundation, since it is only possible to build a fraternal society of solidarity on the basis of essential human values.

I pray the Lord to support the effort of each person who is motivated by a desire to serve the common good and, as I again express my hope that you will all contribute effectively to the good government of this worthy region, I impart my Blessing to each of you and willingly extend it to your families and to the entire Lazio community.

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