The Holy See

*ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS*
*TO OFFICIALS OF THE COURT OF AUDITORS*

*Paul VI Audience Hall*
*Monday, 18 March 2019*

[Multimedia]

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

I am glad to welcome you all, representing the great family of the Court of Auditors: magistrates, administrative staff, relatives and friends. I greet each one of you, starting with your president, Dr. Angelo Buscema, whom I thank for the words with which he introduced our meeting.

This institute of the Italian Republic embodies an ethical nature, the same that underlies the functioning of the State, which has the responsibility “to safeguard and promote the common good of society” (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 240). Indeed, the Court of Auditors carries out an indispensable service based on justice towards the common good. And this is not an ideological concept or a merely theoretical one, but rather is linked to the conditions of full development for all citizens and can be achieved by taking into account the dignity of the person in his or her entirety. For this reason, the state, in all its forms, is called to be the defender of the natural rights of man, the recognition of which is a condition for the existence of the rule of law. Therefore, the good of the human person, always understood in its relational and community dimension, must constitute the essential criterion of all the organs and programs of a nation.

This principle is also essential to wisely carry out the delicate function of accounting magistrate. It requires not only a high level of professionalism and specialization, but above all a properly formed personal conscience, a marked sense of justice, a generous commitment to institutions and the community. In carrying out this task, the Christian magistrate can find help in referring to God; the non-believing magistrate will replace the reference to the transcendent with the reference to the social body, with a different meaning, but with equal moral commitment.

Strict expenditure control hampers the temptation, recurring in those who occupy political or administrative offices, to manage resources not in a prudent way, but rather for the purposes of patronage and mere electoral consent. “A healthy politics is sorely needed, capable of reforming and coordinating institutions, promoting best practices and overcoming undue pressure and bureaucratic inertia. It should be added, though, that even the best mechanisms can break down when there are no worthy goals and values, or a genuine and profound humanism to serve as the basis of a noble and generous society” (Encyclical Letter *Laudato si’* 181).

From this perspective, the important role that the accounting Magistracy plays for the community is placed, in particular in the incessant struggle against corruption. This is one of the most lacerating wounds of the social fabric, as it gravely harms both from an ethical and an economic point of view: with the illusion of quick and easy gains, in reality it impoverishes everyone, removing trust, transparency and reliability from the whole system. Corruption degrades the dignity of the individual and shatters all good and beautiful ideals. Society as a whole is called to commit itself concretely to combating the cancer of corruption in its various forms. The Court of Auditors, in the exercise of controls over the management and activities of public administrations, is a valid tool for preventing and affecting illegality and abuse. At the same time, it can indicate the tools to overcome inefficiencies and distortions.

For their part, individual public administrators must increasingly be aware of their responsibility to operate with transparency and honesty, thus favouring the relationship of trust between the citizen and the institutions, whose dissolution is one of the most serious manifestations of the crisis of democracy. Strict control of expenses by the accounting magistracy on the one hand, and the correct and clear attitude of those responsible for public affairs on the other hand, can curb the temptation to manage resources in a way that is not prudent or for the purposes of patronage. The commons constitute resources that must be protected for the benefit of all, especially the poorest, and in the face of their irresponsible use the State is called upon to perform an indispensable supervisory function, duly sanctioning unlawful conduct.

Dear magistrates of the Italian Court of Auditors, I encourage you to continue with serenity and seriousness in your role, which is central to the definition of important moments of coordination of public finance. May you always be inspired by the awareness of rendering a service, aimed at increasing the culture of legality in society.

To all of you present here, I also address the invitation to live this time of Lent as an opportunity to fix your gaze deeply on Christ, Master and Witness of truth and justice. His word is an inexhaustible source of inspiration for all those who dedicate themselves to the service of the common good. Lent is the quintessential period of spiritual combat, of “agonism”, and this stimulates us to live our personal life and our service to the public sphere not in an inert way, resigned to the evils we encounter in ourselves and around us. Jesus Christ urges us to face evil openly and to go to the root of problems. He teaches us to pay first hand in this struggle, not in

pursuit of unrealistic heroism or for ill-concealed protagonism, but with the humble tenacity of those who carry on their work, often hidden, resisting the pressures that the world does not fail to exercise.

In entrusting you to the protection of Saint Joseph, a “righteous man”, I bless you all and your work. And I ask you, please, to pray for me too. Thank you.

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