



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS
OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF LATIUM**

Saturday, 20 January 1979

Gentlemen, Members of the Executive Committee of Latium, I thank you cordially for this visit which you have wished to pay me at the beginning of my Pontificate and also at the beginning of this new year on behalf of the sixty members of the Regional Council. We would have liked to meet them today and to greet them all with real pleasure. Welcome, for you represent the Italian Region most particularly linked with the pastoral cares of the Bishop of Rome, and you come on behalf of its five Provinces, that is, Rome, Viterbo, Frosinone, Latina and Rieti. ¹ In the last few years the human and social problems of the Region have multiplied; there has grown increasingly the urgent necessity of more modern structures and of services more in keeping with the exigencies of the dignity of the human person. Everyone must be involved in this effort, and the Church cannot remain extraneous to all that is connected with man's real good. The Second Vatican Council expressed itself with great lucidity as follows: "Christ did not bequeath to the Church a mission in the political, economic, or social order: the purpose he assigned to it was a religious one. But this religious mission can be the source of commitment, direction, and vigour to establish and consolidate the community of men according to the law of God", which is a law of justice and love (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 42). For this reason the Church has always, according to the necessity of times and places, given rise to works intended for the service of all, especially the needy; works which have been promoted, with great historical, civil and social merit, by religious institutions. In your gestures and in the assurance, expressed by means of the kind words addressed to us by the President of the Executive Committee, of dedicating special care to the sectors which most directly regard the welfare of the people, I like to see a recognition of the contribution that these works make to the common good. To this recognition there cannot but correspond a commitment to respect their institutional purpose and the spaces of freedom natural to them, so that they may always act in conformity with the religious and moral principles from which they draw their *raison d'être*. May the Executive Committee and the Regional Council, in a real spirit of service and responsibility, prepare suitable solutions in order that — thanks also to the contribution of all social forces — all citizens, in respect of their rights, may live a life really worthy of man. My thought goes at this moment to the sick, to children, to the old, to the unemployed, to drug addicts. ² But to bring this about, one of the fundamental conditions is that a peaceful, serene and harmonious community life should be ensured for all. Pluralism entails in the first place respect for others and renunciation of the use of force to impose oneself

on others. Why is there so much violence today? It is perhaps necessary to go further back, to those conceptions, to those groups that proclaimed and instilled — and continue to proclaim and instil, particularly in the consciences of the young — as an ideal of life, struggle against the other, hatred against anyone who thinks or acts differently, violence as the only means for social and political progress. But violence generates violence; hatred generates hatred; and they both humiliate and degrade the human person.

Christians cannot forget what the Second Vatican Council recalls to us: "We cannot truly pray to God the Father of all if we treat any people in other than brotherly fashion, for all men are created in God's image. Man's relation to God the Father and man's relation to his fellow-men are so dependent on each other that the Scripture says, 'he who does not love, does not know God' (1 Jn 4:8)" (*Nostra Aetate*, 5).

I hope and trust that in the whole Region of Latium, in the whole of Italy, citizens may be able, in this year and in the future, to live a peaceful, serene, and prosperous life, and to contribute, with their honest and industrious work, to the continual growth and real progress of the nation.

With these wishes, I willingly invoke the grace of the Lord on your delicate action, and I impart to you my Apostolic Blessing.

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