



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE ITALIAN
MUNICIPAL POLICE FORCES**

Thursday, 20 January 2000

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

1. With great joy I cordially welcome each of you, members of the Italian Municipal Police Forces who are celebrating your Jubilee on the feast of your heavenly patron, St Sebastian.

I first greet Cardinal Camillo Ruini, President of the Italian Episcopal Conference, who has presided at your Jubilee Eucharist. My thoughts also turn to Hon. Enzo Bianco, Minister of the Interior, and to the mayors and authorities here, whom I thank for their participation in this significant and intense moment of faith. Along with them I greet your families and everyone here.

You offer the community a far from easy, but indispensable service, using all your energies to ensure orderly conduct in urban life. Thanks to you, the residents of the city and the surrounding areas are helped to respect the laws that provide for a peaceful and harmonious society; the disadvantaged and minors can find helpful assistance in their difficulties; the environment, public and private property are safeguarded, and your continual work of prevention is an important safeguard of the citizens' well-being. You also facilitate the relations of individuals with the municipal authorities and their offices. At particular moments of difficulty, your presence becomes a vehicle for the effective solidarity of the entire community.

Clearly, this calls for a great amount of work, which demands steadiness and self-denial at the service of the common good, as well as concern for individuals, a sense of responsibility, continual patience and a spirit of acceptance towards everyone. These are not easy qualities to have, so it is important to rely on God's help.

2. In this faith perspective, you have come here today from various parts of Italy to celebrate the

Jubilee, which is a time of mercy when the Lord gives us the opportunity to make a serious journey of inner purification and to strengthen our good intentions. Inwardly reconciled with God, the believer can become a true peacemaker among the brothers and sisters he meets on his path. This deep spiritual dimension of the Jubilee must lead each person to ask himself about his real efforts to respond to the demands of fidelity to the Gospel, to which the Lord calls him in his own state of life.

The Jubilee Year thus becomes an extraordinary opportunity to make a personal and community examination, in order to renew one's commitment to building the new civilization born of the Gospel, that is, the civilization of love.

The awareness prompted in Christians by the Lord's words: *"As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me"* (Mt 25: 40), will certainly encourage them to practise their profession conscientiously as an act of love for Christ and neighbour.

3. Dear brothers and sisters, in inviting us to pass through the Holy Door, a symbol of Christ who welcomes us and leads us into new life, the Jubilee opens for each person prospects of authentic humanity and of firmer faith in performing his daily professional duties. It challenges you, in particular, to respect human law and make it respected, whenever it does not contradict God's law; it asks you to be artisans of that harmony that stems from fulfilling one's daily tasks and from the elimination of conflicts between individuals; it spurs you in every circumstance to foster solidarity, especially towards the weak and defenceless; it calls you to be guardians of the right to life by ensuring traffic safety and the security of individuals.

In carrying out this mission, may you always remember that every person is loved by God, is his creature and deserves to be accepted and respected. Every human being bears within himself a patrimony of tenderness and hope, which unfortunately is often weakened through injustice and abuse. We are all called to look at others with responsible goodwill, because only love born of God can transform the individual and enable him to grow. May the grace of the Jubilee renew the spirit of faith with which you dedicate yourselves to your profession, prompting you to live it with extra attention, devotion and generosity.

4. I am sure that if you act in this way, not only will you rediscover the importance of your valuable service to the citizens, you will also realize that you have been entrusted with an educational role that, by ensuring the quality of city life, builds a more liveable and peaceful community for everyone.

With these wishes, I invoke God's help upon you and your work, so that you can be authentic artisans of harmony and justice. May your patron, St Sebastian, who wonderfully combined fidelity to God with fidelity to the legitimate laws of the State, and did not disdain giving his life and suffering martyrdom to attain the perennial values that he learned by following Christ, accompany

you. May his example always encourage and support you!

I entrust you to the motherly protection of the Blessed Virgin and gladly impart a special Apostolic Blessing to each of you, to your colleagues and to your families.

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