



The Holy See

OFFICIAL VISIT OF THE HOLY FATHER
TO H.E. Mr GIORGIO NAPOLITANO
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ITALY

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

Quirinal Palace
Thursday, 14 November 2013

[Video](#)
[Photo Gallery](#)

Mr President,

Today, with heartfelt gratitude I reciprocate your courteous visit to me on 8 June at the Vatican. I thank you for the kind words of welcome with which you received me, expressing the sentiments of the Italian people.

In the customary exchange of formalities between Italy and the Holy See, my visit serves to confirm the excellent state of mutual relations that exists; and it is first and foremost intended as a sign of friendship. Indeed, over the course of the first eight months of my Petrine Ministry I have experienced many gestures of attention on your part, Mr President. They are in line with the many acts of kindness which you regularly showed my Predecessor [Benedict XVI](#) during your first seven-year term in office. It is to him that I wish to turn our thoughts and affection at this time, in memory of his visit to the Quirinal Palace, which on that occasion he called “the symbolic home of all Italians” ([Address](#), 4 October 2008).

In paying you a visit in this place so rich in symbols and history, ideally I wish to knock at the door of every inhabitant of this country, to which I trace my own family roots, and offer to everyone the healing and ever new word of the Gospel.

Looking back at the key moments in the relations between the Italian State and the Holy See, I would like to recall the inclusion of the Lateran Pacts and the Accord revising the Concordat in the Constitution of the Republic. We shall be commemorating the 30th anniversary of this Accord in a few weeks time. Here we have a solid normative framework for the serene development of relations between the Church and State in Italy, a framework which reflects and supports a daily collaboration in service to the human person with a view to the common good, in keeping with our respective roles and spheres of action.

There are a great many issues on which we share a common concern and to which we may give a common response. The present time is marked by an economic crisis which is difficult to overcome. One of its most painful consequences is a lack of employment. We must redouble our efforts in order to alleviate these consequences and recognize and strengthen every sign of recovery.

The Church's primary task is to bear witness to the mercy of God and to encourage generous reactions of solidarity in order to open a future of hope. For where hope increases, energy and commitment to building a more human and just social order also grows, and new possibilities for sustainable and healthy development emerge.

My first pastoral visits within Italy are still impressed in my memory. Above all [Lampedusa](#), where I came into contact with the suffering of those who, on account of war or of indigence, risk emigrating in oftentimes desperate conditions. There I also saw the praiseworthy example of solidarity offered by so many who are doing their very best to offer a service of welcome. Then I remember the [visit to Cagliari](#) to [pray before the Madonna of Bonaria](#); and to [Assisi](#), to venerate Italy's Patron Saint whose name I took. Also in these places, I experienced first hand the wounds that afflict so many people today.

The family stands at the centre of society's hopes and struggles. With renewed conviction, the Church continues to encourage the commitment of all, individuals and institutions, in order to support the family, which is the primary place where the human being is formed and grows, and where upright values and examples are learned. The family needs stability and the recognition of its mutual bonds, in order to carry out its irreplaceable task and to fulfill its mission. It needs to be appreciated, valued and protected as it puts its energy at the service of society.

Mr President, on this occasion I especially wish to express the sincere hope, sustained by prayer, that Italy, drawing upon its rich heritage of civil and spiritual values, will find anew the creativity and accord needed for its harmonious development, that it will promote the common good and the dignity of every person, and make its own contribution toward peace and justice to the international community.

Lastly, I am particularly pleased to join in the esteem and affection which the Italian people has for

your person, and to renew my cordial best wishes to you for the fulfillment of the duties of your high office. May God protect Italy and all its inhabitants.