



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MEMBERS
OF THE REGIONAL BOARD OF LAZIO**

Thursday, 15 January 2004

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Welcome to this meeting at the beginning of the New Year that gives us the opportunity for a cordial exchange of greetings. Thank you for your welcome visit. I address a respectful greeting to the President of the Regional Board, Hon. Mr Francesco Storace, to the Mayor of Rome, Hon. Mr Walter Veltroni, and to the President of the Province, Hon. Mr Enrico Gasbarra. I would like to express to them my deep gratitude for the courteous words conveying the sentiments of everyone present. I greet the Presidents and members of the three Council Assemblies as well as those who work with them. This is a favourable opportunity to convey an affectionate thought to all the inhabitants of the City and Province of Rome and of the Lazio Region.

2. The difficulties that mark today's world situation are also felt in our Country. Yet it is in the difficult moments that the positive energies of a people and its representatives can and must emerge more clearly. I would therefore like to renew to you the cordial invitation to confidence and supportive coherence that I have addressed to the Italian people on many occasions.

If we are to build together a society that is more just and more fraternal, each one's contribution is indispensable. Together we must overcome tensions and conflicts; we must join forces to fight terrorism that has unfortunately also contaminated our beloved City.

The way to defeat and prevent every form of violence is by being committed to building the "Civilization of Love". Indeed, love, as I stressed in my [Message for the recent World Day of Peace](#), is also "the loftiest and most noble form of relationship *possible between human beings*" (n. 10).

3. How can we not think of the family as the best place in which to build the "Civilization of Love"? Families are the human environment in which the person can feel, from the very beginning of his or her existence, the warmth of love and develop harmoniously. This explains the acclaim accorded political and administrative decisions in support of the nuclear family, seen as "a natural society based on marriage", according to the *Italian Constitution* (art. 29). This is the context of the provisions made by the Boards you direct to meet the needs of families with very young children or to help the family institution fulfil its primary role in the education of children. To this end, school is always of fundamental importance. The Church is pleased to contribute to it with her educational institutions that play an appreciated social role, and hence, are entitled to support.

4. Various other sectors of social life require concrete interventions. I am thinking of those who find themselves in situations of acute need, of the elderly who live alone, of neglected minors, of the weaker social categories such as those of many immigrants. I am thinking of the young who are looking confidently to the future and waiting to be taught justice, solidarity and peace. The parishes, religious communities, Catholic institutions and volunteer services will continue to offer their comprehensive contribution in Rome, in the Province and throughout the Region, by making available every human and spiritual resource.

5. Distinguished Representatives of the Regional, Provincial and Municipal Boards, thank you for what you are doing with commitment. I am particularly grateful to you for your attention to the Church's pastoral and social action, which is always and only concerned to serve humanity and witness to the Gospel of hope.

I entrust you and your projects to the Virgin Mary, who is called upon in the City, in the Province and in Lazio with many evocative titles that witness to an intense, deeply-rooted devotion among the people. I assure you of my remembrance in prayer and upon you, your co-workers, your families and the respective populations you represent, I invoke God's Blessing.

A Happy New Year to you all!