



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE MEMBERS OF THE ITALIAN PRISON POLICE

Monday, 27 September 2004

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I am very glad to greet you and to welcome you here. I greet Dr Giovanni Tinebra, Chief of the Department of Prison Administration, whom I thank for his courteous words, the officers present and dear Mons. Giorgio Caniato, the General Inspector of Chaplains. I extend my greeting in particular to you, *probationary Women Police Officers for Women's Prisons*. This meeting is especially for you, who have just ended your year's training.

2. I learned with pleasure that you have demonstrated praiseworthy commitment during the course and have achieved encouraging results. I congratulate you and take this opportunity to offer you a suggestion: *always take care of your spiritual life*. Indeed, your role requires sound human maturity that will enable you to combine firmness with consideration for people. To this end, *your being women is certainly helpful*, for you possess those truly feminine qualities that have a positive effect on interhuman relationships. However, what you will need above all is *the inner strength that comes from prayer*, that is, from intimate union with God in every situation of life, including daily tasks.

3. By a felicitous coincidence, today, 27 September, is the *liturgical commemoration of St Vincent de Paul*, a great saint of charity. He personally suffered the hardship of prison and taught the "Ladies", who later became the Daughters of Charity, to pay special attention to that category of the poor who are condemned to hard labour. He demanded they be treated with humanity and understanding. St Vincent was motivated by the love of Christ, who also in the Gospel identifies himself with prisoners (cf. Mt 25: 36, 40, 43, 45). *The primary value of the human person* must be the basis of all civil and professional ethics and of the related training. I am therefore pleased to place you and your work under the protection of St Vincent de Paul.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I warmly hope that the desire for the authentic promotion of justice will be successfully expressed in every sector of the Italian Prison Administration, and I thank you for your courteous visit and willingly impart my Apostolic Blessing to you all and to your loved ones.

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