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## Benedict XVI's Address to Mayor of Rome

**"Original Cell of the Society Is the Family, Founded on Marriage Between a Man and Woman"**

VATICAN CITY, JAN. 14, 2011 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Here is a translation of the address Benedict XVI delivered today upon receiving the mayor of Rome, Giovanni Alemanno, along with the administrators of the Lazio Region of the Municipality and Province of Rome, on the occasion of the traditional exchange of good wishes for the New Year.

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Illustrious Gentlemen and Ladies!

Following a happy custom, this year also I have the pleasing occasion of meeting the representatives of the Institutions of the Lazio region, of the Municipality and of the Province of Rome. I thank the Honorable Renata Polverini, president of the Regional Junta of Lazio, the Honorable Giovanni Alemanno, mayor of Rome, and the Honorable Nicola Zingaretti, president of the Province of Rome, for the courteous words addressed to me on behalf of all. I return the cordial good wishes for the New Year to you, to the citizens of Rome and of the Province and to the inhabitants of Lazio, to whom I feel particularly linked as Bishop of this city, Successor of Peter.

Rome's singular vocation, center of Catholicism and capital of the Italian State, requires of our city that it be an example of fruitful and profitable collaboration between the public institutions and the ecclesial community. Such collaboration, in respect of the reciprocal competencies, is particularly urgent today because of the new challenges that appear on the horizon. The Church, particularly through the work of the lay faithful and of the associations of Catholic inspiration, wishes to continue to offer her contribution for the promotion of the common good and of genuinely human progress.

Original cell of the society is the family, founded on marriage between a man and woman. It is in the family that the children learn the human and Christian values that make possible constructive and peaceful coexistence. It is in the family that solidarity between the generations, respect for rules, forgiveness and acceptance of the other is learned. It is in their own home that young people, experiencing the affection of their parents, discover what love is and learn to love. Hence, the family must be supported by organic policies that are not limited to propose solutions to contingent problems but have as their aim its consolidation and development and are accompanied by an adequate educational endeavor. At times, unfortunately, grave violent events occur, and some aspects of crisis of the family are amplified, caused by rapid social and cultural changes.

Also the approval of forms of union that pervert the essence and end of the family, ends by penalizing all those who, not without effort, are committed to living stable affective bonds, guaranteed juridically and recognized publicly. In this perspective, the Church looks favorably on all those initiatives that seek to educate young people to live love in the logic of the gift of self, with

a lofty and oblation vision of sexuality. Serving this aim is an educational convergence between the different components of the society, so that human love is not reduced to an object to consume, but can be perceived and lived as a fundamental experience that gives meaning and purpose to existence.

The reciprocal giving of themselves of spouses bears with it openness to generation: the desire of paternity and maternity is in fact inscribed in man's heart. So many couples would like to receive the gift of new children, but they are driven to wait. Because of this, it is necessary to support maternity concretely, as well as to guarantee to women who are engaged in a profession the possibility of combining family and work. Too many times, in fact, they are placed in the necessity of choosing between the two. The development of adequate policies of help, as well as of structures destined for children, such as nurseries, also those run by families, could help to make the child not to be seen as a problem, but as a gift and great joy. Moreover, because "openness to life is at the center of true development" ("Caritas in Veritate," No. 28), the high number of abortions that are practiced in our Region cannot leave one indifferent. The Christian community, through numerous "Family Homes," "Center of Help to Life" and other similar initiatives, is committed to support and give sustenance to women who are in difficulty in accepting a new life. Public institutions are able to offer their support so that Family Consultants are able to help women to surmount the causes that can induce them to interrupt their pregnancy. To this end, I express my appreciation for the law in force in the Lazio region that provides the so-called "family quotient" and considers the conceived child as a component of the family, and I hope that this norm will be fully accomplished. I am happy that the city of Rome has already undertaken its commitment in this direction.

On the other side of life, the aging of the population poses new problems. The elderly are a great richness for society. Their knowledge, their experience and their wisdom are a patrimony for young people, who are in need of teachers of life. If many elderly are able to count on the support and closeness of their family, the number is growing of those who find themselves in fragile conditions because of their age or precarious health. While I rejoice over the existing synergy with the great Catholic health realities -- as, for example, in the field of children, between the "Bambino Gesù" Hospital and the public institutions -- I hope that these structures will be able to continue to collaborate with the local entities to ensure their service to all those who turn to them, I renew the invitation to promote a culture that respects life until its natural end, in the awareness that "the measure of humanity is determined essentially in the relationship with suffering and the one who suffers" (Encyclical "Spe Salvi," No. 38).

In these last times, the serenity of our families is threatened by the grave and persistent economic crisis, and many families can no longer guarantee a sufficient tenor of life to their children. Through Caritas, our parishes spend themselves to help these family nuclei, alleviating, in so far as possible, the hardships, and addressing the primary needs. I trust that adequate provisions will be adopted, geared to supporting low income families, particularly those that are numerous, too often penalized. To this is added every day a more dramatic problem. I am referring to the serious question of work. Young people in particular, who after years of preparation do not see work openings and the possibility of social insertion and of projection of the future, often feel disappointed and are tempted to reject society itself. The prolonging of similar situations causes social tensions, which are exploited by criminal organizations by proposing illicit activities. Hence, it is urgent that, despite the difficult moment, every effort be made to promote occupational policies, which can guarantee work and dignified sustenance, indispensable condition to give life to new families.

Dear Authorities, many are the problems that require a solution. May your commitment as administrators, who make an effort to collaborate together for the good of the community, always be able to consider man as an end, so that he can live in a genuinely human way. Hence, as Bishop of this city I would like to invite you to find in the Word of God the source of inspiration for your

political and social action, in the "search for the true good of all, in the respect and promotion of the dignity of every person" (Post-Synodal Apostolic "Exhortation Verbum Domini," No. 101).

I assure you of my remembrance in prayer, above all for those who today begin their service to the common good, and while I invoke on your commitment the maternal protection of the Virgin Mary, Salus Populi Romani, I impart to you my heartfelt Blessing, which I gladly extend to the inhabitants of Rome, of its Province and of the whole of Lazio.

[Translation by ZENIT]

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