



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS
TO THE OFFICIALS OF THE TRIBUNAL OF THE ROMAN ROTA
FOR THE INAUGURATION OF THE JUDICIAL YEAR**

*Clementine Hall
Friday, 24 January 2014*

Dear Prelate Auditors,

Officials and Collaborators of the Apostolic Tribunal of the Roman Rota,

I am meeting with you for the first time, on the occasion of the inauguration of the juridical year. I cordially greet the College of Prelate Auditors, beginning with the Dean, Msgr Pio Vito Pinto, whom I thank for the words he addressed to me on behalf of all present. I also greet the Officials, the Advocates and other collaborators, as well as the members of the Rotal Studium. This meeting offers me the opportunity to thank you for your valuable ecclesial service. My acknowledgments go in a special way to you, Rotal Judges, who are called to carry out your delicate work in the name and by mandate of the Successor of Peter.

The juridical dimension and the pastoral dimension of the Church's ministry do not stand in opposition, for they both contribute to realizing the Church's purpose and unity of action. In fact the judicial work of the Church, which represents a service to truth in justice, has a deeply pastoral connotation, because it aims both to pursue the good of the faithful and to build up the Christian community. Such activity constitutes a peculiar development of the power of governance, turned toward the spiritual care of the People of God, and is therefore fully inserted in the journey of the mission of the Church. It follows that the judicial office is a true *diakonia*, that is, a service to the People of God in view of strengthening the full communion between individual members of the faithful, and between them and the ecclesial body. Furthermore, dear Judges, through your specific ministry, you offer a qualified contribution in confronting emerging pastoral themes.

I would now like to sketch a brief profile of the ecclesiastical judge. Firstly, his *human profile*: to be

a judge requires a kind of human maturity, that is expressed in calm judgment, detached from personal views. Part of human maturity is also to be able to immerse oneself in the mentality and legitimate aspirations of the community in which one carries out one's service. Like this, he will become an interpreter of the *animus communitatis* which characterizes that portion of the People of God affected by his work. He will also be able to exercise justice in a way adapted to the exigencies of the concrete situation, and not in a legalistic and abstract way. As a result, superficial knowledge of the situation of people awaiting his judgment will not suffice; rather, he will feel the need to enter more deeply into the situation of the parties involved, studying in depth the documents and every element relevant to the judgment.

The second aspect is the *judicial* one. In addition to the requirements of juridical and theological doctrine, in the exercise of his ministry the judge is characterized by his knowledge of law, the objectivity of judgement and fairness, by judging with imperturbable and impartial equidistance. In his work he is also guided by the intent to safeguard truth, respecting to the law, without overlooking the delicacy and humanity proper to a pastor of souls.

The third aspect is the *pastoral* one. As an expression of the pastoral concern of the Pope and Bishops, the judge is required not only to have proven competence, but also to have a genuine spirit of service. He is the servant of justice called to treat and judge the condition of the faithful, who with confidence turn to him, by imitating the Good Shepherd who cares for the wounded lamb. That is why he must be inspired by pastoral charity; that charity which God poured into our hearts through "the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5:5). Love — St Paul writes — "binds everyone together in perfect harmony" (Col 3:14), and constitutes the soul as well as the function of the ecclesiastical judge.

Your ministry, dear judges and officials of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota, lived out in the joy and serenity that come from working where the Lord has placed us, is a special service to the God of Love, who is close to every person. You are essentially shepherds. As you carry out your juridical work, do not forget that you are pastors! In every case, every profession and every cause, people are waiting for justice.

Dear friends, I thank you and I encourage you to proceed in your *munus* with scrupulosity and gentleness. Pray for me! May the Lord bless you and may Our Lady protect you.