



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS TO MEMBERS OF THE "CONSIGLIO SUPERIORE DELLA MAGISTRATURA"

*Clementine Hall
Tuesday, 17 June 2014*

I sincerely apologize for the last time. At midmorning I had a turn, a temperature, and I had to cancel my appointments. I apologize for that.

I welcome you, who make up the High Council of the Judiciary, colleagues and family members. I thank Prof. Michele Vietti for his gracious words; I address a warm thought to the President of the Italian Republic, who presides over this Institution.

The task entrusted to you in service to the Nation is meant to ensure the proper functioning of a vital sector of social life. Therefore, I would like to express my esteem and support for your work and for those employed in this sector of strict integrity and profound legal and civic responsibility.

I would like to pause for a moment on the *ethical aspect* embodied in the office of the Judiciary. In every Country, legal rules are designed to protect the liberty and independence of judges, so that they may carry out, with the necessary guarantees, their important and delicate work. This places you in a position of particular significance, in order to competently fulfill the duties of the office that society has entrusted to you, to maintain consistent and unquestionable impartiality; to adjudicate with objectivity and prudence, solely on the basis of the proper legal standard and, above all, to respond with the voice of steadfast integrity based on fundamental values. The independence of the judge and the objectivity of the judgment expressed require the precise and timely application of the laws in force. In a democratic society, the guarantee of rights and the balance of powers are united under the principal of legality, which the judge is tasked to safeguard.

A judge's decisions influence not only the rights and property of citizens, but are also pertinent to their very existence. Consequently, a judge must, on every level, possess the intellectual, psychological and moral qualities that guarantee integrity to such an important role. Among all qualities, the one that predominates, and I would say is specific to the judge, is *prudence*. Which is not a virtue for standing still: "I am prudent: I'm standing still", no! It's a virtue of governing, a virtue that moves things forward, the virtue that predisposes one to calmly ponder the reasons of law and which must, in fact, be the basis of judgment. One has a high level of prudence when there is a strong inner balance, the ability to overcome the pressures that emanate from one's own character, from one's own personal views, from one's own ideological convictions.

Italian society expects a lot from the Judiciary, especially in the current context of, among other things, the erosion of values and evolving democratic structures. It's your duty not to fall short of the people's legitimate expectations. Strive to be an ever greater example of moral integrity for the whole of society. There is no shortage of valuable lessons and *role models* to inspire you. I would like to mention the shining examples of Vittorio Bachelet, who led the High Council of the Judiciary in times of tremendous difficulty and who fell victim to the violence of the so-called "Years of Lead"; and Rosario Livatino, who was killed by the Mafia, and whose Cause for Beatification is underway. They offered exemplary witness to the true style of lay Christian faith: loyal to institutions, open to dialogue, steadfast and courageous in defence of justice and the dignity of the human person.

May the Lord, fair Judge and merciful Father, light up your lives and your actions. May his blessing accompany you and support each one of you and your collegial work, as well as your colleagues in the Judiciary and your families. Thank you.