



The Holy See

INAUGURATION OF THE JUDICIAL YEAR OF VATICAN CITY STATE TRIBUNAL

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

*Hall of Benediction
Saturday, 2nd March 2024*

[Multimedia]

*Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Magistrates!*

I am glad to meet you for the inauguration of the 95th judicial year of the Vatican City State Tribunal; I address my warmest greeting to you all.

I thank the Italian civil and military authorities for their presence.

I greet the President of the Tribunal, the adjunct President and the Promoter of Justice, along with the Magistrates and co-workers of their respective offices, as well as the Presidents of the Courts of Appeal and the Supreme Court. I thank you for your delicate and demanding service; and together with you, I thank the Gendarmerie Corps for their competent collaboration.

On this occasion, I wish to reflect briefly with you on a virtue to which I often return as I follow the events that affect the administration of justice, also in Vatican City State: I am referring to *courage*.

For Christians, this virtue, which combined with fortitude during difficult moments, assures constancy in the pursuit of good and makes us capable of facing trials, does not represent only a particular quality of the soul that is characteristic of some heroic people. It is, rather, a trait that is given and strengthened by the encounter with Christ, as a fruit of the action of the Holy Spirit that anyone can receive, if they invoke him. Courage contains a humble strength, which rests on faith and on God's closeness, and is expressed in a particular way in the capacity to act with patience

and perseverance, rejecting the internal and external conditioning that hinders the accomplishment of good. This courage disorientates the corrupt and backs them, so to speak, into a corner, with their closed and hardened hearts.

Even in well-organized, well-regulated and institutionally supported societies, personal courage is still necessary in order to deal with different situations. Without this healthy audacity, we run the risk of giving in to resignation and end up overlooking many abuses, small and large. Those who are courageous do not aim for their own prominence, but for solidarity with the brothers and sisters who bear the weight of their fears and weaknesses.

We see this courage with admiration in many men and women who live through very hard trials: think of victims of wars or those who are subjected to continuous human rights violations, including the many persecuted Christians. When we are confronted with these injustices, the Spirit gives us the strength not to resign ourselves. He stirs indignation and courage within us: indignation in the face of these unacceptable situations, and the courage to try to change them.

Ladies and gentlemen, with this courage we are called to deal also with the difficulties of everyday life, in the family and in society, to strive for the future of our children, to safeguard the common home, to assume our professional responsibilities. And this applies in particular to the sphere in which you work, that of the administration of justice. Indeed, together with the virtues of prudence and justice, which must be informed by charity, and together with the necessary temperance, the task of judging requires the virtues of fortitude and courage, without which wisdom risks remaining sterile.

It takes courage to leave no stone unturned in the rigorous ascertainment of the truth, remembering that dispensing justice is always an act of charity, an opportunity for fraternal correction that is intended to help others to recognize their error. This applies even when particularly grave and scandalous behaviour emerges and must be sanctioned, and even more so when it occurs within the Christian community.

Courage is needed while one is engaged in ensuring due process and is subjected to criticism. The robustness of institutions and the firmness of the administration of justice are demonstrated by the serenity of judgement, independence and impartiality of those called upon to judge at the various stages of the trial. The best response is industrious silence and serious commitment to work, which enable our Courts to administer justice with authority and impartiality, guaranteeing due process, while respecting the peculiarities of the Vatican system.

Finally, it takes courage to implore in prayer that the light of the Holy Spirit may always illuminate the discernment necessary to reach the outcome of a just verdict. In this context too, I would like to recall that discernment is done “on one’s knees”, imploring the gift of the Holy Spirit, so as to be able to reach decisions that point in the direction of the good of persons and the entire ecclesial

community. In reality, stated by Law CCCLI on the Order of the State, “administering justice is a necessity not only of a temporal order. In fact, the cardinal virtue of justice enlightens and epitomizes the very purpose of the judicial power proper to every State, for the cultivation of which the personal, generous and responsible commitment of those entrusted with the judicial function is essential in the first place”. This commitment demands to be sustained by prayer. One must not be afraid to ‘waste’ time by devoting an abundance of time to it. And this also requires courage and fortitude.

Dear Magistrates of the Tribunal and the Office of the Promoter, I hope that in your service to justice you may always maintain, together with prudence, Christian courage. I pray to the Lord to strengthen this virtue in you. From my heart I bless you and your work, entrusting it to the Blessed Virgin, *Speculum iustitiae*. And, please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.

L'Osservatore Romano, Weekly Edition in English, Fifty-seventh year, number 10, Friday, 8 March 2024, p. 10.