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The Pope warns against the indiscriminate exploitation of landscape and historical resources

The defence of the environment and investment in the care of the territory to prevent disasters and degradation were the main themes of the Pope's address to the presidents of the Union of the Italian Provinces (UPI), whom he received this morning in audience.

The provinces, as the Pontiff explained, arise from the aggregation of territories with a homogenous historical and cultural fabric, which explains their longevity and suitability for promoting the protection of local authorities in relation to the Government, the Parliament and economic and social forces. At present, the areas in which they operate are mainly linked to interventions in defence of the land and the consolidation of areas at risk, the viability of a generalized road network connecting small centres with larger cities, and the management of upper secondary schools, guaranteeing their safety and functionality.

observed, "These are tasks that, even while carried out in different sectors, have the same ultimate goal", he observed; "to ensure that the environmental conditions of the territory, such as roads and schools, do not deteriorate due to negligence, lack of necessary maintenance, and indolence in the adoption of measures necessary to avoid environmental or structural degradation and the consequent dangers. This general action requires the ability to plan, constant commitment and an adequate availability of the necessary resources to carry out the tasks regularly. However, it is therefore necessary to promote and disseminate more a acute and aware environmental sensibility. The importance of caring for the common home, understood in all its aspects, must be increasingly felt, both by citizens and by their representatives in the institutions". He recalled that alongside progress and achievements in various sectors, "there are still imbalances and marginalities – indeed, at times these are even increasing – that demand intelligent and fraternal commitment by all in order to be adequately faced. In this regard, there is a need both for the work of groups and associations of civil society, and for conscious and constant attention from the different levels of public powers", which include the provinces.

He added, "You are well aware of the relevance to the public good of the implementation of projects and policies that, rather than favouring the abandonment or sacking of the territory, are aimed at its attentive care and at bringing to light potentialities and specific characteristics, without however giving way to environmental upheavals or to the indiscriminate exploitation of landscape and historic-environmental resources. You are well aware of the importance of safe schools and roads for the regular progress of civil life and as an indispensable backdrop to any ordered development. You know how consistent the savings and consequent economic

advantages can be for a community if it finds the wisdom to invest money and human resources to prevent imbalance, dysfunction and degradation”.

The Pope concluded his address to the representatives of the provinces by urging them to be “a driving force for a mentality that takes as its aim a truly sustainable development, positioning itself in harmony with the immense network of relations and realizations created by nature, history, work and the intelligence of the generations that have preceded us”.
