



Speech of Renato Raffaele Cardinal Martino

New York Encounter Benefit Dinner

New York Athletic Club – 180 Central Park South, NYC

June 8, 2011 – 7:30pm

1) Thank you. I would like to begin by offering my heartfelt greetings to Deputy Consul Laura Aghilarre, representing the Italian Consul General, Francesco Talo', along with the organizers of New York Encounter, about which I will speak more in a moment. And, of course, I am delighted to greet and welcome my many dear friends present this evening, whom I came to know while serving at the Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations as well as new friends whom I've met tonight for the first time. Welcome to each of you!

2) I have traveled here from Italy, returning to this beautiful city, at the request of New York Encounter. It was an easy invitation to accept, as I could not pass up the opportunity to see you, my old (and less old) friends, once again! In agreeing to participate in this event, I also wanted to recommend New York Encounter to your interest and generosity.

3) Please be sure, dear friends, that you have often been in my mind and in my prayers over these many years. Seeing your faces tonight brings back many happy memories of the sixteen years I spent with you in New York. I will always be grateful for the support you gave to me during that challenging and consequential

time. I feel certain our time together indelibly shaped and affected our lives. Your presence here is also a sign that our friendship, based as it is on our common faith in Jesus Christ, lasts forever and cannot be weakened by the limits of time or space.

4) As I mentioned, the other reason I have come tonight is to recommend New York Encounter as an endeavor that is truly worthy of your interest and your generosity. All of you know too well the social context in which we live. In this period, it has become increasingly difficult to build anything that is beneficial to the dignity and value of the human person. A “culture of death,” as Blessed John Paul II called it, surrounds us and often seems to prevail in our society. There is no need for me to go into detail about this situation. It is unfolding before our eyes.

5) How, then, do we not lose hope? And how can we bring an antidote, a real and concrete response that can fully engage people today? The Church wants to be present in this world – as it is, without forgetting any aspect – through those facts, people, and events that witness to the new life and knowledge generated by faith in Jesus Christ. For the Christian, this engagement with the world is called evangelization and it is not something optional or added on to our faith. As Pope Paul VI reminded us so movingly in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiando*: “Finally, the person who is evangelized goes on to evangelize others. Here lies the test of truth, the touchstone of evangelization: it is unthinkable that a person should accept the Word and give himself to the kingdom without becoming a person who bears witness to it and proclaims it in his turn.”

6) New York Encounter is one of those facts that bear public witness to Jesus and His kingdom – a very interesting and exciting fact, I might add! This annual cultural event was born from the experience of Communion and Liberation, an international lay movement recognized and embraced by the Catholic Church. As explained in its mission statement, New York Encounter is “a meeting point for people of different beliefs, traditions, and cultures striving for reciprocal understanding, mutual building, and true friendship.”

7) I strongly believe that cultural initiatives like New York Encounter are fundamental for the building of a society where all human life is valued, where those inalienable rights belonging to every person from conception until natural death are defended, where the need each of us has for ultimate meaning is affirmed and treasured. As Pope Benedict himself has reminded us, there will be no lasting betterment of society unless “the intelligence of faith becomes the intelligence of reality.”

8) Therefore I want to thank the organizers of New York Encounter for their dedication and participation in this important mission of the Church in our society. As I recall, I was myself at the root of Communion and Liberation’s spreading into American soil. At the United Nations fifteen years ago, I agreed to present *The Religious Sense*, the first book of their founder Msgr. Luigi Giussani that had just been translated into English. I am encouraged to see that the members of CL did not stop at that event. Their presence in the public square has in fact spread to over

130 places in the United States; their Crossroads Cultural Center tackles many important and fascinating subjects; and the proposal of faith they make in high schools and universities is precise and clear, as it is in all the spheres of life they engage with.

9) New York Encounter is the latest but not the least “fact” born from their commitment to making the Church present in society, so that the “culture of death” may become, in the Risen Lord’s own time, a “culture of life,” valuing truth, beauty, and the rights and dignity of all. My dearest friends, these good people need your help: that is, your friendship, your interest, your time, and your financial support.