



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO SUPERIORS AND STUDENTS
OF THE PONTIFICAL ECCLESIASTICAL ACADEMY***

Consistory Hall

Saturday, 2 June 2007

*Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,
Dear Superiors and Priests,*

All of you who form the family of the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy are most welcome!

I have listened with gratitude and attention to your President's address to me in your name, and I heartily thank him.

His congratulatory words about the book *Jesus of Nazareth*, fruit of my personal search for the Face of Christ, show that the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy rightly considers the yearning to know the Lord ever more as a fundamental value for those, like yourselves, called to diplomatic service and to a particular collaboration with the Successor of Peter.

In fact, dear students, the more you seek the Face of Christ, so much better can you serve the Church and the Christian and non-Christian people whom you will meet on your path as Pontifical Representatives scattered in every part of the world.

When, like today, I have the happy opportunity to meet you, I think of your future service to the Church. I think also of your Bishops, who have sent you to the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy to help the Pope in his universal mission to the particular Churches and to the diverse civil bodies with whom the Holy See has contacts.

The service to which you are destined and for which you are preparing here in Rome, is a service of qualified witness to the Church and to the authorities of the country to whom, God willing, you

will be posted.

The Gospel witness is asked to remain faithful in every circumstance to the mission entrusted to him. For you this requires, in the first place, a personal and profound experience of the Incarnate God, an intimate friendship with Jesus, in whose Name the Church sends you for a singular apostolic duty.

You know that the Christian faith cannot be reduced to mere intellectual knowledge of Christ and his doctrine; it must also be expressed in the imitation of the examples Christ has given us as Son of the Father and Son of man.

In particular, he who collaborates with the Successor of Peter, supreme Shepherd of the Catholic Church, is called to do his best to be himself a true shepherd, ready like Jesus the Good Shepherd to give his life for the flock.

The basic aspiration to be shepherds that motivates you and which you have expressed through your President, pleases me very much. Always be shepherds alongside the other shepherds of the Church, also before being, alongside the Pontifical Representatives with whom you will collaborate, promoters of dialogue and weavers of fruitful relationships with the authorities and civil bodies, according to the particular Catholic tradition.

Cultivate this desire so that those who approach you can always discover the priest that is in you. Hence, you will clearly make known to all the atypical character of Pontifical diplomacy; a diplomacy which, as the numerous diplomatic missions accredited to the Apostolic See show, far from defending material interests or partial visions of man, promotes values that come from the Gospel as expressions of the lofty ideals proclaimed by Jesus, the sole and universal Saviour. These values, moreover, are also in no small measure the shared patrimony of other religions and cultures.

Dear friends, also when you will leave the Academy - more than 10 of you will do so in the coming weeks - continue to cultivate an intimate and personal friendship with Jesus, seeking to know ever better and to assimilate the thoughts and sentiments that were his (cf. Phil 2: 5).

The more profoundly you know him, the more firmly you remain united to him and the more faithful you remain to your priestly duties, the more and the better will you be able to serve humanity and the more fruitful will your dialogue with people be.

The peace that you will propose in cases of tension or conflict will seem possible and the more consoling will be the comfort which, in the Name of Christ and his Church, you will offer to tried and defenceless people.

In this way, the ideal convergence of your mission and the evangelization proposed by those responsible for pastoral care will appear more clearly to the eyes of the world.

Dear brothers, while I entrust these brief reflections to your attention, I am pleased to renew my wish for every good for you and your families. I heartily assure you of a remembrance in my prayers and, invoking the maternal protection of the Virgin Mary, I gladly bless you, those who take care of your formation and all your loved ones.

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