



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE COMMUNITY
OF THE PONTIFICAL ECCLESIASTICAL ACADEMY****

Hall of Popes

Monday, 9 June 2008

Venerable Brother,

Dear Priests of the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy,

I am pleased to welcome you and address my cordial welcome to each one of you. I greet, first of all, Archbishop Beniamino Stella, your President, and thank him for the devoted sentiments he has expressed to me on behalf of all. I greet his Collaborators and I also greet you, dear Students, with special affection. Our meeting is taking place in this month of June, in which the Christian people practice special devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, an inexhaustible furnace from which to draw love and mercy to witness and spread among all the members of the People of God. We priests must be the first to quench our thirst at this font if we are to be able to communicate the divine tenderness to others in carrying out the different ministries that Providence entrusts to us.

May each one of you, dear Priests, increasingly develop your knowledge of this divine love: only in this way will you be able to bring to completion, with fidelity and without compromise, the mission for which you are preparing during these years of study. The apostolic and diplomatic ministry at the service of the Holy See that you will carry out wherever you are sent requires skills that cannot be improvised; treasure this period of your formation, therefore, so that later you can deal suitably with every situation. In your daily work you will come into contact with ecclesial circumstances that require understanding and support: you will often be living far from your land of origin in countries that you will learn to know and love; you will have to bring the worlds of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy closer to one another and be prepared to offer not only the contribution of your own diplomatic experience but also and above all your priestly witness. For this reason, in addition to the necessary and obligatory juridical, theological and diplomatic training, what matters most and marks your life is that your activity reflect a faithful love for Christ and for the Church that inspires

in you a welcoming pastoral concern for all.

To carry out this task faithfully, seek from this very moment to "live by faith in the Son of God" (Gal 2: 20); in other words, strive to be Pastors according to the Heart of Christ who engage in daily and intimate conversation with him. Unity with Jesus is the secret of authentic success for every priest's ministry. Whatever work you carry out in the Church, always seek to remain his true friends, faithful friends who have encountered him and have learned to love him above all else. Communion with him, the divine Master of our souls, will guarantee you peace and quiet even in the most complex and difficult moments.

Caught up in the vortex of frenetic activity, humanity often runs the risk of losing the meaning of life, while a certain contemporary culture casts doubt on every absolute value and even on the possibility of recognizing truth and goodness. It is therefore necessary to witness to the presence of God, a God who understands man and can speak to his heart. Your precise task will be to proclaim the joyful and comforting news of the Gospel of love with your way of life even before your words in contexts that are sometimes very distant from the Christian experience. Thus, be docile listeners to the Word of God every day; live in it and live by it so as to make it present in your priestly activity. Proclaim the truth that is Christ. May prayer, meditation and listening to the Word of God be your daily bread. If communion with Jesus grows within you, if you live by him and not only for him, you will radiate his love and glory around you.

Besides listening daily to the Word of God, may the celebration of the Eucharist be the heart and centre of every one of your days and of your entire ministry. Priests, like every baptized person, live by Eucharistic communion with the Lord. It is impossible to receive the Lord every day, taking his Body and Blood into our hands, pronouncing the tremendous and wonderful words: "This is my Body, this is my Blood" without letting ourselves be seized by him, without letting ourselves be won over by fascination for him, without letting his infinite love change us from within. May the Eucharist become a school of life for you in which Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross teaches you to make a total gift of yourselves to your brethren. In carrying out his mission, the Papal Representative is required to offer his neighbour this testimony of acceptance, the fruit of constant union with Christ.

Dear Priests of the Ecclesiastical Academy, thank you once again for this visit of yours which enables me to emphasize the importance of the role and function of Apostolic Nuncios, offering myself at the same time the opportunity to thank all who work in the Nunciatures and in the Diplomatic Service of the Holy See. I extend a special greeting and good wishes to all those who are about to leave the Academy and take up their first post: may the Lord sustain you and accompany you with his grace. I entrust you all, dear brothers, to the protection of the Holy Mother of God, a model and comfort for all who aspire to holiness and dedicate themselves to the cause of the Kingdom. May the Patrons of the Ecclesiastical Academy, St Anthony Abbot, St Peter and St Paul watch over you. We are preparing to celebrate a Jubilee Year of the latter on the occasion

of the 2,000th anniversary of his birth. May you always be accompanied by my prayers and by the Blessing that I warmly impart to each one of you, to the Reverend Sisters, to the Academy Staff and to all your loved ones.

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