



# The Holy See

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***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI  
TO THE SUPERIORS, ALUMNI AND FORMER ALUMNI  
OF THE PONTIFICAL NORTH AMERICAN COLLEGE  
ON THE 150th ANNIVERSARY OF ITS FOUNDATION***

*Hall of Blessing  
Saturday, 9 January 2010*

*Your Eminences,*

*Dear Brother Bishops and Priests,*

I am pleased to welcome the alumni of the Pontifical North American College, together with the Rector, faculty and students of the seminary on the Janiculum hill, and the student priests of the Casa Santa Maria dell'Umiltà. Our meeting comes at the conclusion of the celebrations marking the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the College's establishment by my predecessor, Blessed Pius IX. On this happy occasion I willingly join you in thanking the Lord for the many ways in which the College has remained faithful to its founding vision by training generations of worthy preachers of the Gospel and ministers of the sacraments, devoted to the Successor of Peter and committed to the building up of the Church in the United States of America.

It is appropriate, in this [Year for Priests](#), that you have returned to the College and this Eternal City in order to give thanks for the academic and spiritual formation which has nourished your priestly ministry over the years. The present Reunion is an opportunity not only to remember with gratitude the time of your studies, but also to reaffirm your filial affection for the Church of Rome, to recall the apostolic labors of the countless alumni who have gone before you, and to recommit yourselves to the high ideals of holiness, fidelity and pastoral zeal which you embraced on the day of your ordination. It is likewise an occasion to renew your love for the College and your appreciation of its distinctive mission to the Church in your country.

During my [Pastoral Visit to the United States](#), I expressed my conviction that the Church in

America is called to cultivate “an intellectual ‘culture’ which is genuinely Catholic, confident in the profound harmony of faith and reason, and prepared to bring the richness of faith’s vision to bear on the pressing issues which affect the future of American society” (*Homily at Nationals Stadium*, Washington, 17 April 2008). As Blessed Pius IX rightly foresaw, the Pontifical North American College in Rome is uniquely prepared to help meet this perennial challenge. In the century and a half since its foundation, the College has offered its students an exceptional experience of the universality of the Church, the breadth of her intellectual and spiritual tradition, and the urgency of her mandate to bring Christ’s saving truth to the men and women of every time and place. I am confident that, by emphasizing these hallmarks of a Roman education in every aspect of its program of formation, the College will continue to produce wise and generous pastors capable of transmitting the Catholic faith in its integrity, bringing Christ’s infinite mercy to the weak and the lost, and enabling America’s Catholics to be a leaven of the Gospel in the social, political and cultural life of their nation.

Dear brothers, I pray that in these days you will be renewed in the gift of the Holy Spirit which you received on the day of your ordination. In the College chapel, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary under the title of the Immaculate Conception, Our Lady is portrayed in the company of four outstanding models and patrons of priestly life and ministry: Saint Gregory the Great, *Saint Pius X*, Saint John Mary Vianney and Saint Vincent de Paul. During this *Year for Priests*, may these great saints continue to watch over the students who daily pray in their midst; may they guide and sustain your own ministry, and intercede for the priests of the United States. With cordial good wishes for the spiritual fruitfulness of the coming days, and with great affection in the Lord, I impart to you my Apostolic Blessing, which I willingly extend to all the alumni and friends of the Pontifical North American College.

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