



The Holy See

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

*Consistory Hall
Monday, 14 June 2010*

*Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,
Dear Priests,*

I always welcome you with joy at our customary meeting which gives me the opportunity to greet and encourage you and to suggest to you some reflections on the meaning of work in the Papal Representations. I greet the President, Archbishop Beniamino Stella, who supervises your formation with dedication and a sense of Church, and I thank him for the words he has addressed to me on behalf of all. I extend a grateful thought to his collaborators and to the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Child Jesus.

I would like to reflect briefly on the concept of representation. In the contemporary understanding it is often seen only in part; in fact, there is a tendency to associate it with something merely external, formal and not very personal.

Yet the service of representation for which you are preparing is on the contrary something far deeper, because it implies participation in the *sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum* that characterizes the Ministry of the Roman Pontiff. It therefore is an eminently personal office, destined to affect profoundly those who are called to carry out this particular task. In this same ecclesial perspective, the exercise of representation entails the need to accept and to nurture with special attention in one's own priestly life certain dimensions that I would like to point out, if only briefly, so that they may motivate reflection in the process of your formation.

First of all, the cultivation of a full inner adherence to the Pope's person, to his Magisterium and to

the universal Ministry; full adherence, namely, to the person who has received the task of strengthening his brethren in the faith (cf. Lk 22: 32) and "is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the Bishops and of the whole company of the faithful" (Second Vatican Council, Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, n. 23). Secondly, the assumption in your lifestyle and as a daily priority of attentive care a real "passion" for ecclesial communion. Again, representing the Roman Pontiff means having the ability to be a solid "bridge", a reliable channel of communication between the particular Churches and the Apostolic See: on the one hand by making available to the Pope and his collaborators an objective, correct and profound vision of the ecclesial and social reality in which you live; and on the other, by striving to pass on the norms, instructions and guidelines that the Holy See issues. You must not do this in a bureaucratic manner but with profound love for the Church and with the help of personal trust, patiently built up, while at the same time respecting and making the most of the efforts of the Bishops and the progress of the particular Churches to which you are sent.

As can be imagined, the service you are training to carry out demands full dedication and a generous readiness to sacrifice, if necessary, personal insights, your own projects and other possibilities of exercising the priestly ministry. In a perspective of faith and of a practical response to God's call always to be strengthened through an intense relationship with the Lord this does not detract from each person's originality but rather proves extremely enriching: the effort to attune oneself to the universal perspective and to the service to the unity of God's flock, peculiar to the Petrine Ministry, is in fact capable of enhancing the gifts and talents of each one in a unique way, in accordance with that logic which St Paul expressed clearly to the Christians of Corinth (cf. 1 Cor 12: 1-31). In this way the Papal Representative together with those who work with him truly becomes a sign of the Pope's presence and charity. And if this is a benefit for the life of all the particular Churches, it is especially so in those very delicate or difficult situations in which, for various reasons, the Christian community lives. This implies an authentic priestly service, characterized by a close analogy with the representation of Christ typical of the priest which, as such, has an intrinsic sacrificial dimension.

Precisely from this derives the particular style of the service of representation that you will be called to exercise with State Authorities or International Organizations. In these contexts too, in fact, the figure and the type of presence of the Nuncio, of the Apostolic Delegate and of the Permanent Observer is not only determined by the environment in which he works but, in the first place and mainly, by the one whom he is called to represent. This puts the Papal Representative in a special position in comparison with other Ambassadors or Envoys. In fact, he will always be profoundly identified, in a supernatural sense, with the one whom he represents. Making yourself a spokesman of the Vicar of Christ can be difficult, at times extremely demanding, but it will never be mortifying or depersonalizing. Instead it will become an original way of fulfilling your own priestly vocation.

Dear Students, as I express the wish that your House, as my Predecessor Paul VI liked to say,

may be an "advanced school of charity", may my prayers accompany you as I entrust you to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, *Mater Ecclesiae*, and of St Anthony Abbot, the Academy's Patron. I gladly impart my Blessing to you all and to your dear ones.

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