



The Holy See

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

Consistory Hall

Friday, 10 June 2011

*Venerable Brother in the Episcopate,
Dear Priests,*

I am glad to meet the community of the students of the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy once again this year. I greet Archbishop Beniamino Stella, the President, and I thank him for his kind words expressing your sentiments too. I greet with affection all of you who are preparing yourselves to carry out a special ministry in the Church.

Papal diplomacy, as it is commonly called, has a very longstanding tradition and its activity has made a considerable contribution to shaping the actual features of diplomatic relations between States in the modern day. In the traditional conception of diplomacy, even in the ancient world, the envoy, the ambassador, was essentially a person invested with the office of conveying the sovereign's words authoritatively and, for this reason, could represent him and negotiate on his behalf. The solemnity of the ceremonial and the honours traditionally paid to the envoy himself, which also acquired religious features, are in fact a tribute to the person he represents, as well as to the message he conveys.

Respect for the envoy constitutes one of the loftiest forms of recognition, by a sovereign authority, of the right to exist on an equally dignified footing with people other than himself. Therefore, welcoming an envoy as a partner in dialogue, listening to his words, means laying the foundations of a possible peaceful coexistence. It is a delicate role that demands on the envoy's part an ability to offer these words in a manner that is both faithful — respecting as far as possible the sensibility and opinion of others — and effective. The real skill of the diplomat lies in doing this and not, as is

sometimes mistakenly thought, in astuteness or in those approaches that represent rather the degeneration of diplomatic practice. Loyalty, consistence and profound humanity are the fundamental virtues of any envoy, who is called not only to place his work and his talents, but indeed, his whole self, at the service of a word that is not his own.

The rapid transformations of our time have profoundly reshaped the figure and role of diplomatic representatives; their mission however, remains essentially the same: that of being the intermediary of a correct communication between those who exercise the function of government and, consequently, of being an instrument for building possible communion between peoples and consolidating peaceful relations and solidarity among them.

How does the Holy See diplomat and his activity — which obviously has quite particular aspects — fit into all this? In the first place, as has been stressed several times – the diplomat is a priest, a bishop, a man who has chosen to live at the service of a word that is not his own. In fact, he is a servant of the Word of God and, like every priest, is invested with a mission that cannot be carried out part time but requires him, with his whole life, to make the message entrusted to him, the Gospel message, resonate. And it is on the very basis of this priestly identity, very clear and lived deeply, that he succeeds with a certain naturalness in fulfilling the specific task, in the context of the state or of international organizations, of conveying the Pope's word in the perspective of his universal ministry and of his pastoral charity — to particular Churches and to institutions in which sovereignty is legitimately exercised.

In carrying out this mission the Holy See diplomat is called to exercise his human and supernatural gifts. It is easy to understand that in the exercise of such a delicate ministry care for his own spiritual life, the practice of human virtues and his education in a solid culture go hand in hand and support one another. They are dimensions that enable him to maintain a profound inner equilibrium in a job which, among other things, demands the capacity for openness to others, fair judgement, a critical distance from personal opinions, sacrifice, patience, constancy and at times also firmness in dialogue with all. Besides, service to the Successor of Peter, whom Christ has constituted as the principle and perpetual and visible foundation of the unity of faith and of communion (cf. First Vatican Council, *Pastor Aeternus*, Denz. 1821 [3051]; Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 18), permits him to live with a constant and profound reference to the Church's catholicity. And wherever there is openness to the objectivity of catholicity, there is also the principle of authentic personalization: life spent at the service of the Pope and of ecclesial communion is, from this point of view, extremely enriching.

Dear students of the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy, in sharing these thoughts with you I urge you to commit yourselves to your training process without reserve and, at this moment, I am thinking with special gratitude of the Nuncios, Apostolic Delegates, Permanent Observers and all those who serve in the Papal Representations scattered across the world. I willingly impart the Apostolic Blessing to you, to the President, to his co-workers and to the community of the

Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Child Jesus.

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