



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE COMMUNITY OF THE PONTIFICAL THEOLOGICAL
FACULTY "TERESIANUM" OF ROME**

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 19 May 2011*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am pleased to meet you and to join you in giving thanks to the Lord for the 75 years of the Pontifical Theological Faculty Teresianum. I cordially greet the Grand Chancellor, Fr Saverio Cannistrà, Superior General of the Discalced Carmelite Order and I thank him for his beautiful words; with him I willingly welcome the Fathers of the Generalate. I greet the President, Fr Anian Álvarez-Suárez, the academic Authorities and the entire teaching body of the Teresianum, and I greet you with affection, dear students, Discalced Carmelites, men and women religious of various orders, priests and seminarians.

Three quarters of a century have thus passed since that 16 July 1935, the liturgical Memorial of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, in which the then International College of the Order of Discalced Carmelites in the City was established as a theological faculty. From the outset it was oriented to developing spiritual theology in the framework of the anthropological question. The Institute of Spirituality came into being over the years. Together with the Theological Faculty it constitutes the academic centre that goes by the name of "Teresianum".

Looking back at this Institution's history, let us praise the Lord for the marvels he has worked in it, and, through it, in the many students who have attended it. First of all, being a part of this academic community is a special ecclesial experience, strengthened by all the riches of a great spiritual family, such as the Order of Discalced Carmelites. Let us remember the far-reaching renewal movement that St Teresa of Jesus and St John of the Cross generated in the Church through their witness.

It was John of the Cross who inspired that rekindling of ideals and fervour for contemplative life which in the 16th century set Europe and the whole world on fire. Dear students, your work of in-depth anthropological and theological study is also in continuity with this charism, the task of penetrating Christ's mystery with that understanding of the heart which is both knowing and loving. This requires that you place Jesus at the centre of all things, of your affections and thoughts, of your time in prayer, study and action, of your whole life.

He is the Word, the "living book, as he was for St Teresa of Avila, who said: "to learn the truth he had no other book than God (*La Vida* [Autobiography], 26, 5). I hope that each one of you will be able to say with St Paul, "I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil 3:8).

In this regard I would like to recall St Teresa's description of the inner experience of conversion before the Crucified One, as she herself once experienced it. She wrote: "When I looked at it... so great was my distress when I thought how ill I had repaid him for those wounds that I felt as though my heart were breaking, and I threw myself down beside him, shedding floods of tears and begging him to give me strength once for all so that I might not offend him" (*La Vida*, 9, 1).

With the same dynamism the Saint seems to ask us too: how is it possible to be indifferent to such great love? How can we disregard the One who has loved us with such great mercy? The love of the Redeemer deserves the full attention of our heart and mind and can activate within us that wonderful cycle in which love and knowledge nourish one another.

Throughout your theological studies, always keep your gaze fixed on the ultimate reason why you undertook them, that is, on Jesus, for "by this we know love, that he laid down his life for us" (cf. 1 Jn 3:16). May you be aware that these years of study are a precious gift from divine Providence; a gift that should be accepted with faith and lived diligently as a unique opportunity to grow in the knowledge of Christ's mystery.

A thorough in-depth study of Christian spirituality, starting with its anthropological presuppositions, is of great importance in the contemporary context. The specific formation it provides is certainly significant, for it equips and trains the student to teach this discipline and constitutes an even greater grace because of the know-how it brings concerning the sensitive task of spiritual direction.

As she has always done, today the Church continues to recommend the practice of spiritual direction not only to those who desire to follow the Lord closely but to every Christian who wishes to live responsibly his or her Baptism, that is, new life in Christ.

Everyone, in fact, especially those who have heeded the divine call to follow Christ closely, needs to be accompanied personally by a guide reliable in doctrine and expert in the things of God, this

guide can help people to watch out for facile forms of subjectivism, making available their own knowledge and experience lived in the following of Jesus.

It is a matter of establishing the same personal relationship that the Lord had with his disciples, the special bond with which he led them, following behind him, to embrace the Father's will (cf. Lk 22:42), namely, to embrace the Cross.

Dear friends, may you too, to the extent that you are called to this irreplaceable duty, cherish what you have learned in these years of study, in order to accompany those whom divine Providence will entrust to you, helping them in the discernment of spirits and in the ability to respond to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, in order to lead them to the fullness of grace, "until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13).

Dear friends, you come from all over the world. Here in Rome your hearts and minds are encouraged to be open to the universal dimension of the Church, they are stimulated to *sentire cum Ecclesia*, in profound harmony with the Successor of Peter.

I therefore urge you to put into action an ever greater and more enthusiastic capacity for loving and serving the Church. In this Easter Season let us ask the Risen Lord for the gift of his Spirit, and let us ask it sustained by the prayer of the Virgin Mary. May she who together with the Apostles in the Upper Room invoked the Paraclete obtain for you the gift of wisdom of heart and a fresh outpouring of heavenly gifts for the future that awaits you.

Through the intercession of the Mother of God and of St Teresa of Jesus and of St John of the Cross, I cordially impart the Apostolic Blessing to the community of the Teresianum and to the entire Carmelite Family.