



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO RECTORS, PROFESSORS AND SEMINARIANS OF
THE PONTIFICAL SEMINARIES OF
CAMPANIA, CALABRIA AND UMBRIA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE CENTENARY OF THEIR FOUNDATION**

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 26 January 2012*

Dear Cardinals, Venerable Brothers and Dear Seminarians,

I am very pleased to receive you on the occasion of the centenary of the foundation of the Pontifical Seminaries of Campania, Calabria and Umbria. I greet my brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood, the three rectors, together with the co-workers and teachers, and I greet you especially with affection, dear seminarians! The birth of these three regional seminaries in 1912 should be seen as part of the broader task of improving the qualifications of candidates to the priesthood that was undertaken by [St Pius X](#), in continuity with [Leo XIII](#).

To meet the need for a higher standard of formation, diocesan seminaries were grouped together in new regional seminaries and theological studies were streamlined. This gave rise to a tangible improvement in quality, thanks to the acquisition of a basic culture common to all and to a sufficiently long and well-structured study period. In this regard the Society of Jesus played an important role. Indeed the direction of five regional seminaries, including that in Catanzaro, was entrusted to the Jesuits from 1926 to 1941; and the one in Posillipo, since its foundation to this day. However it was not only academic formation that benefited, since the promotion of community life among young seminarians from different diocesan situations laid the foundations for considerable human enrichment. The case of the Campano Seminary in Posillipo is unique. It has been open to all the southern regions since 1935, when it was granted the faculty to award academic qualifications.

The experience of the regional seminaries is still timely and effective in the current historical and ecclesial context. Thanks to their connection with the theological faculties and institutes, they give access to higher studies, providing an appropriate training for the complex cultural and social situation in which we live. Moreover, the interdiocesan character of these seminaries is turning out to be an efficient “training ground” for communion, which is developed in the encounter of different sensibilities to be harmonized in the one service to Christ’s Church.

In this regard the regional seminaries make an effective and practical contribution to the Dioceses’ journey in communion to fostering knowledge, the capacity for cooperation and an enrichment in ecclesial experiences among the future priests, the formation staff and the Pastors of the particular Churches. The regional dimension is also an effective mediation between the line of the universal Church and the demands of the local realities that steers clear of the risk of particularism.

Your regions, dear friends, have each a rich spiritual and cultural patrimony, while they are beset by social problems. Let us think, for example, of Umbria, the homeland of St Francis and St Benedict! Imbued with spirituality, Umbria is a continuous pilgrimage destination. At the same time, this small region is suffering from the unfavourable economic situation as much as and more than others. In Campania and in Calabria, the vitality of the local Church, nourished by a religious sense that is still alive thanks to solid traditions and devotions, must be expressed in a renewed evangelization. In those lands the testimony of ecclesial communities, has to reckon with serious social and cultural emergencies, such as unemployment, especially for youth, or the phenomenon of organized crime.

Today’s cultural context demands that priests have a solid training in philosophy and theology. As I wrote in my *Letter to Seminarians*, at the end of the *Year for Priests*, “the point is not simply to learn evidently useful things, but to understand and appreciate the internal structure of the faith as a whole, which is not a summary of a thesis, but an organism, an organic vision, so that it can become a response to people’s questions, which on the surface change from one generation to another yet ultimately remain the same” (cf. n. 5).

In addition, the study of theology must always be closely tied to the life of prayer. It is important that the seminarian understand properly that while he is applying himself to this subject, it is in fact a “Subject” who is calling him, the Lord, who has enabled him to hear his voice, inviting him to spend his life at the service of God and of his brethren. Thus, in today’s seminarian and tomorrow’s priest, the *unity of life*, as intended by the Conciliar Document *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (n. 14), can be visibly expressed through his *pastoral charity*, “the internal principle, the force which animates and guides the spiritual life of the priest inasmuch as he is configured to Christ the Head and Shepherd” (John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 23).

In fact the harmonious integration between the ministry, with its multiple activities, and the priest’s

spiritual life is indispensable. “It is important for the priest, who is called to accompany others through the journey of life up to the threshold of death, to have the right balance of heart and mind, reason and feeling, body and soul, and to be humanly integrated” (*Letter to Seminarians*, 18 October 2010, n. 6).

These are the reasons that impel us to pay great attention to the human dimension of the formation of candidates for the priesthood. It is indeed in our humanity that we present ourselves to God, to be authentic *men of God* for our brothers. Indeed, anyone who wishes to become a priest must be first and foremost a “man of God”, as St Paul wrote to his pupil Timothy (1 Tim 6:11).... “It follows that the most important thing in our path towards priesthood and during the whole of our priestly lives is our personal relationship with God in Jesus Christ” (cf. *Letter to Seminarians*, n. 1).

Blessed Pope John XXIII, receiving the Superiors and students of the Campano Seminary on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of its foundation, on the eve of the Second Vatican Council, expressed this firm conviction: “Your education strives for this, in expectation of the mission that will be entrusted to you for the glory of God and the salvation of souls: to train the mind, to sanctify the will. The world is waiting for saints; this above all. We need holy and sanctifying priests even more than cultured, eloquent and up-to-date priests”.

These words still sound timely because — throughout the Church, and in your specific regions of origin — the need for Gospel workers, credible witnesses and those who champion holiness with their own lives, is more pressing than ever. May each one of you respond to this call! I assure you of my prayer for this, while I entrust you to the motherly guidance of the Blessed Virgin Mary and warmly impart to you a special Apostolic Blessing. Many thanks.