



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE ALUMNI
OF THE PONTIFICAL NORTH AMERICAN COLLEGE**

*Clementine Hall
Saturday, 7 November 1992*

*Your Eminences,
Your Excellencies,
Dear Brothers in Christ,*

1. I am very 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. During this year commemorating the five hundredth anniversary of the first preaching of the Gospel to the peoples of the Americas, you have returned to Rome, where you received the spiritual, doctrinal and pastoral formation which has nourished your own apostolate as ambassadors of Christ (2 Cor. 5:20) and ministers of his Church. In this City, the *communis patria* of the Catholic faithful, it is appropriate that you give thanks for the abundant harvest of faith and good works reaped in the United States by the generations of priests who have gone before you. It is likewise fitting to beseech the Lord that the Catholics of your country will be granted the grace needed to carry out the new evangelization which is so essential in these last years of the second Christian Millennium (cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 44).

2. In the years since 1859, when the Bishops of the United States, at the invitation of Pope Pius IX, first established your College in the old monastery of Our Lady of Humility, the advancement of the Church's mission in American society has involved meeting ever new challenges and opportunities. During this time, the North American College has continued to serve its original purpose: to lead its students to *intimate union with Jesus Christ*, whose life and saving activity they are called to share as priests. As I recently noted in my Apostolic Exhortation "Pastores Dabo Vobis", it is precisely in this union with Christ that we as priests must discover "our identity, our true dignity, the source of our joy, the very basis of our life" (John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 18). Strengthened in their love of the Good Shepherd, the alumni of the College have contributed

notably to the building up of the Church in their native land as faithful preachers of the Gospel and celebrants of the Sacraments, presenting with credibility and conviction the unchanging truths of the Faith, and drawing their people, often from widely differing ethnic and social backgrounds, into the unity of the Body of Christ.

Your College has fulfilled its mission primarily by enabling its students to experience in a unique way the *catholicity of the Church* and to *partake in a living tradition* which pervades every aspect of their priestly formation: from their theological studies done in contact with professors and students from all over the world, to their hours of quiet prayer and contemplation at the tombs of the martyrs and saints, to their closeness to the Successor of Peter and his solicitude for all the Churches (cf. 2 Cor. 11:28). Today, when the circumstances of the apostolate demand above all that the priest be a "man of communion", deeply rooted in the truth and charity of Christ (John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 18), such a formative experience remains as valuable as ever. I pray that the North American College will continue to foster the growth of God's people in your country by inspiring in young priests an ever deeper love for the Church as a mystery of communion embracing men and women of every time and place, and by enkindling a zeal to serve this mystery in every aspect of their priestly lives.

3. Dear Brothers, during these days of your annual reunion may you be renewed in the gift of the Holy Spirit which you received on the day of your Ordination. I hope that, in fidelity to your consecration as sharers in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, Head and Shepherd of the Church, you will cooperate ever more fully with the divine plan "to bring all things in the heavens and on earth into one under Christ's headship" (Eph. 1:10). Commending all of you to the loving intercession of Our Lady of Humility, Patroness of the College, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of joy and peace in Jesus her Son.

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