



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE RECTORS OF THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING
SEMINARIES OF EUROPE**

Friday, 18 February 1994

Dear Brothers in Christ,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome the *Rectors of the English-speaking Seminaries and Colleges from various European countries*. I am aware that for several years you have been coming together annually in one or other of your countries, in order to discuss and pray about the many questions and problems which arise in the course of your important work of training and forming future priests, both diocesan and Religious. This year you have chosen Rome as your meeting-place, and I pray that your stay here, near the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul, will be an occasion of special graces and of renewed commitment to the obligations you have undertaken for the good of the Church.

Your task is not an easy one. It is your responsibility to ensure that the students who come to your Colleges receive a sound training in philosophy, theology and all the many practical skills needed in priestly work. But study is by no means the only purpose of seminary life. The young men in your care have to be *taught how to pray*, how to come close to the Lord who has called them to his special and immediate service. Intimacy with the Divine Shepherd—this is what your students must acquire. Without it they cannot become good priests; without it they will be in danger of falling away.

Philosophy, theology and prayer: and a further vital element is of course human development. Priests must be as educated as anyone else, if they are to be able to meet people on equal terms, to be all things to all men, as the Apostle Paul says. What is more, it cannot be taken for granted that your students have already acquired *a full and rounded grasp of the basic truths of the Faith* before they come to you. Here is something which it is your duty to verify, and where necessary to remedy.

As you spend these days in discussion and prayer, I ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten you and fill you with fresh courage. Your work is vital for the life of the Church and I thank you for all you are doing. Entrusting you to the intercession of Mary, Mother of Priests and Mother of the Church, I impart my Apostolic Blessing to you, to your assistants and to all your students.

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