



The Holy See

Message of the Holy Father John Paul II to the Rectors of English-speaking Seminaries in Europe

*To the Participants
in the Annual Conference of Rectors
of English-speaking Seminaries in Europe*

It gives me great pleasure to greet you, the Rectors of English-speaking Seminaries in Europe, and through you I am pleased to send warm greetings to the members of your individual Seminary Communities. In this Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 you have chosen Rome as the place for your annual meeting, and I pray that the Holy Year will indeed be for you an occasion of special graces and of renewed commitment and fervour as you seek to fulfil the tasks which you undertake for the good of the Church and the salvation of souls.

Your particular duties as Rectors are characterized by your relationship with the Bishops who send men to you for preparation in priestly service, with the staff who assist in the formation of the seminarians, with the students entrusted to your care and supervision, with the presbyterate and the diocesan communities where these men will eventually serve as priests. Thus, it is clear that you must be men of solid human relations on all levels — ecclesiastical, academic and spiritual — and that you must be men of communion. Yours is the responsibility to make the most of the gifts and talents of others and to act as competent guides, leading individuals and the seminary community as a whole with decisiveness and with pastoral sensitivity.

In all of this it is most important that you should be men of prayer, true disciples of the Lord Jesus. The philosophical, theological and pastoral training which your institutions impart will be empty and ineffective if it is not thoroughly steeped in the person of Jesus Christ, in intimate knowledge of the Son of God, in the daily lived experience of the one Saviour of all humanity. First and foremost among your many duties and responsibilities, in fact the foundation upon which all of them stand, is your own faithful witness to an active life of prayer. If you strive truly to be men of prayer and seek to instil this same spirit in your seminarians, you can be assured that as the Church moves into the Third Christian Millennium she will be ready to respond joyfully and effectively to the needs of the people she is called to serve. For she will have priests who have learned to put themselves constantly in the Lord's presence — speaking to him, listening to him, being taught by him, being loved by him — so that they in turn can do the same for others, speaking to them, listening to them,

teaching them and loving them in the name of the Lord.

As you spend these days together in discussion and reflection, may the Holy Spirit enlighten you and give you ever fresh courage to fulfil this vital work for the People of God. In a special way during this Holy Year I commend you to Mary, Mother of Priests and Mother of the Church, and I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to you and to the staff and students of your Seminaries.

From the Vatican, 17 February 2000.

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