



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE COMMUNITY
OF THE ROMAN MAJOR SEMINARY**

Saturday, 24 February 2001

Dear Friends!

1. Here I am among you once again for a gathering that is now part of the tradition of the Roman Seminary, which is the Pope's Seminary. It is a fitting occasion to reaffirm by my presence what I recently wrote in my Message to the Diocese of Rome: "I wish to assure [our diocesan seminaries] that they are constantly in my thoughts and are especially remembered in my prayer" (n. 6).

First of all, I express my esteem and affection to the Cardinal Vicar, who has just celebrated his 70th birthday. Once again I offer him my gratitude for the good he does in serving the Church of Rome and, as President of the Episcopal Conference, in serving the entire Church in Italy. I greet the Bishops here, the parish priests and the priests who have spoken on this important occasion, as well as the seminary's rector and teachers. I greet each of you, dear seminarians, who are making your formational journey here and are preparing for the total gift of yourselves to the cause of the kingdom. I extend my greetings to your parents, friends and the young people who have joined the seminary community today to honour *Our Lady of Trust* and to take part in this celebration.

2. We were deeply moved while listening to the oratorio composed by dear Mons. Marco Frisina. It was inspired by the brief but intense earthly life of a former seminarian, the Servant of God Bruno Marchesini, who died dreaming of the priesthood when he was only 23. You rightly call him your "heavenly friend". His life was a constant and courageous journey towards holiness.

We learn from the pages of his diary that in 1936, at the end of May during his second year of

philosophical studies, he consecrated himself to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Solemnly repeating the offering of his chastity, he wrote: "Through you, O Mary, today I have dared to present the flowering lily of my purity to Jesus, truly present in my heart under the Eucharistic veil. You inspired me to do this, you will help me preserve it with all the fervour of this day". He added, as if clearly to emphasize his thought, that this consecration expressed his intention of a "supreme dedication of love to Jesus Christ".

3. Bruno Marchesini understood that Our Lady is the surest way to reach Jesus and to belong to him totally and for ever. This has also been my personal experience. Welcome the Blessed Virgin into your lives as your Mother, dear seminarians. May each of you have a loving knowledge of Mary's role, especially during the valuable years of formation when you are preparing to become a priest, that is, an *"alter Christus"*.

In the seminary chapel you venerate the Blessed Virgin with the title *"Our Lady of Trust"*. I urge you to come and visit her often and to open your heart to her: Mary is "the radiant dawn and sure guide for our steps" (*Novo millennio ineunte*, n. 58). The Lord's faithful Servant will also help you, like your "heavenly friend" whom we recall today, to dedicate your lives to the service of the Gospel in a generous journey of holiness.

4. To be saints: this is every Christian's programme, because "the ways of holiness are many, according to the vocation of each individual" (*ibid.*, n. 31). I hope that this programme will also direct your lives, dear young friends. You have enthusiastically experienced World Youth Day; you saw the hundreds of thousands of your contemporaries who came to the Apostle Peter's tomb from every part of the world. They came to strengthen their faith and to express their firm decision to be men and women of the Beatitudes in the new millennium.

Rome needs saints! The fruitful season of a new evangelization is opening before us, demanding the courage of holiness if it is to be successful. Dear seminarians, bring this yearning to your daily prayer. Make it your own, imitating your friend, Bruno Marchesini, who addressed these words to Jesus on Christmas in 1937: "Make me a holy priest or call me to you first. Make me understand how miserable this life is, if it is not entirely spent in loving you".

5. In the oratorio we heard Jesus' invitation: *"Come and see"*, with John's comment: *"They came and saw where he was staying; and they stayed with him"* (Jn 1: 39).

Dear friends, what the Evangelist said about his own vocation has enabled us to reread Bruno Marchesini's life in depth and to discover his sincere devotion to the Blessed Virgin, the woman who belonged fully and completely to the Lord.

Let us look again to her, the Mother of Christ, and ask her to teach us, too, to *"stay"* with the Lord. Let us ask her that the Roman Seminary community may be more and more consciously a

"genuine school of prayer, where the meeting with Christ is expressed not just in imploring help but also in thanksgiving, praise, adoration, contemplation, listening and ardent devotion, until the heart truly "falls in love" (*Novo millennio ineunte*, n. 33). May all this become your daily experience!

May she whom you learn to call upon as *Our Lady of Trust*, a title so dear to Bl. John XXIII who also passed through your seminary, be your hope and comfort!

With these sentiments, as I thank you once again for this meeting, I cordially give you all a special Apostolic Blessing.