



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE MEETING
PROMOTED BY THE PONTIFICAL
NORTH AMERICAN COLLEGE IN ROME**

Friday, 10 January 2003

Your Eminences,

Your Excellencies,

Dear Brothers in Christ, With great affection I greet the *alumni of the Pontifical North American College*, together with the Rector, faculty and students of the seminary department and the student priests of the Casa Santa Maria dell'Umiltà. You have gathered in Rome for the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of two events which opened a new chapter in the history of the College: the dedication of the seminary building on the Janiculum and the inauguration of the Casa Santa Maria as a priestly house of study. May this anniversary deepen your commitment to the College's continuing mission of training priests imbued with a deep sense of the universality of the Church and zeal for the spread of God's Kingdom both in your native land and throughout the world. Your meeting this year brings you back to Rome and the College, to cherished places where, with the idealism and generosity of youth, you once pledged yourselves to the pursuit of knowledge, wisdom and holiness for the service of God's People. At a time of difficulty and suffering for Catholics in the United States, I assure all of you of my prayerful solidarity. It is my fervent hope that these days of reflection, prayer and priestly fraternity will *strengthen you in your noble vocation* to be disciples of Jesus Christ, witnesses to the truth of his Gospel and shepherds completely committed to the renewal of his Church in faith, hope and love. Dear brothers, amid the challenges and hopes of the present moment, I urge you to keep your gaze fixed on Jesus, our High Priest, who never ceases to inspire and perfect our faith (cf. *Heb 12:2*), Commending you and the faithful whom you serve to the loving prayers of Our Lady of Humility, Patroness of the College, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of joy and peace in the Lord.