



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE PONTIFICAL COLLEGES  
OF THE EASTERN CATHOLIC CHURCHES IN ROME**

*Monday, 12 May 2003*

*Your Beatitude,*

*Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,*

*Dear Students,*

1. With pleasure I cordially welcome each of you. Today, it gives me great joy to meet the superiors and students of the Pontifical Colleges and formation communities of the Eastern Catholic Churches in Rome.

I first greet the Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, Cardinal Ignace Moussa I Daoud, and thank him for his cordial words expressing your common sentiments. I then extend my greeting to the Secretary, the Undersecretary, the officials and personnel of the Congregation, as well as to the superiors of the seminaries and colleges and to all those present.

2. This happy occasion reminds me of the Apostolic Visits I have been able to make in recent years to the Ecclesial Communities to which you belong. I carry in my heart a fraternal memory of your Patriarchs, Bishops, priests and the entire People of God whom I was able to meet. I am also very conscious of the complex problems and challenges that the Catholic Churches of the East are called to face in our time.

Then, turning my gaze to many of your countries, I spontaneously and forcefully reassert the hope that peace will be constantly consolidated in those regions; that just and peaceful solutions will restore harmony and acceptable living conditions to the peoples who have been so sorely tried by tension and unjust oppression. May the Lord enlighten the leaders of Nations so that they work courageously, respecting the law, for the common good and for the freedom of every religious

Community.

3. I am grateful to the Congregation for the Oriental Churches that takes care of the formation of seminarians and priests, collaborates with and supports religious institutes in the training of their members and helps with the formation of competent lay men and women for the apostolate. This praiseworthy activity is expressed in various initiatives that embrace the contexts of Eastern studies, of the liturgy proper to the tradition of every rite, of continuing formation at all levels and of the constant updating of pastoral experiences.

The work of the Congregation during this academic year has included the creation of St Ephrem College in Via Boccea, which offers Arab-speaking priests of various rites a suitable place for prayer, ecclesiastical studies and rewarding apostolic activity.

I ask you, dear seminary superiors, to carry out with dedication the precious work you are already doing for the students entrusted to your care. You provide them with spiritual guidance, human education and vocational discernment, advanced training in theological and ecclesiastical studies, cultural deepening and the protection of ritual identity, and ecclesial and pastoral growth.

Dear students, seminarians and priests, men and women religious, dear lay men and women, do your best to make the most of the various opportunities that you are offered in Rome so as to serve your Communities better in the future.

4. In *Orientale Lumen* I noted that it is indispensable to improve our knowledge of one another in order to grow in reciprocal understanding and unity. I then indicated some guidelines which I am repeating here, so that they may be a constant programmatic and pedagogical reference for you. I particularly want to mention the knowledge of the liturgy of the Eastern Churches and of the spiritual traditions of the Fathers and Doctors of the Christian East.

It is necessary to follow the example of the Eastern Churches for the inculturation of the Gospel Message: to avoid tension between the Latin and Oriental faithful and to encourage dialogue between Catholics and the Orthodox. Moreover, it is advisable to train in specialized institutions theologians, liturgists, historians and canonists for the Christian East, who in turn can spread knowledge of the Eastern Churches, as well as to provide appropriate teaching on these subjects in the seminaries and theological faculties, especially to future priests (cf. n. 24).

5. I offer these suggestions for your consideration as I invoke upon each of you and on your Communities the motherly protection of Mary, "Queen of the Holy Rosary".

I am close to you with affection, and as I assure you of my prayers, I cordially impart to you all a special Apostolic Blessing, which I willingly extend to your loved ones, to those who collaborate with the colleges, to the Communities to which you belong and to all who, with their charity,

support your work of education which is so important for the Church's mission in the East.

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