



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF POPE PAUL VI  
TO THE COMMUNITY  
OF THE PONTIFICAL ECCLESIASTICAL ACADEMY\***

*Monday 6 March 1978*

Beloved Priests, students of the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy!

You desired so insistently, as we are informed by your excellent and venerated President, Archbishop Cesare Zacchi, this joyful meeting. It takes place at the end of the annual Spiritual Exercises, and on the occasion of the departure of the second-year Students for the Pontifical Representations to which they have been assigned in the last few days.

But, we will tell you, the meeting gives us, too, deep joy. First because we see so many of you, and we can thus establish *de visu* that the Academy, in industrious silence, continues its high mission for the formation of members of the diplomatic service of the Holy See: for this it has been desired and sustained by the Roman Pontiff, since 1701. Second, because we see, well represented among you, the various peoples of the world from which you come: Canada, France, Germany, India, Italy, Malta, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, Uganda, United States, Vietnam, Yugoslavia. The internationalization desired by the Second Vatican Council is clearly in progress also in your centuries-old Institution, which therefore manifests in a suitable form the new requirements of the moment, in fact a new and promising appearance.

But above all we rejoice on this occasion, because we can assure you in this way that we follow you with fatherly affection, with particular solicitude and with pastoral attention. The Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy is too important and delicate an institution for us to fail to take the opportunity to manifest to you Students, and to all those concerned about its fate, the care with which we personally follow it. And even if we cannot receive you every year – the last audience, in fact, goes back to March of the Holy Year – this anxiety is a deep and daily one for us. And we follow in thought and in prayer all those who preceded you to attend to their specific formation, and

who are now serving the Holy See in the place and with the rank assigned to them, in a golden chain which every year grows longer with new links, let us say with new lives consecrated to the Church and to the Apostolic See.

Because it is just a question of this; of a unique and privileged service, often obscure and unknown, far from home and country – far, too, and this is the greater sacrifice, from this centre of the Catholic world which has left a deep mark on your young lives as priest students – in order to be efficient instruments of liaison between Peter's Chair and the local Churches (bishops, priests and faithful) as also between the humble *Servus Servorum Dei* and the supreme authorities who govern the destinies of the Peoples. And this is always in the sign of Christ, of his Gospel, of the peace which he spread in the world, for the elevation of brothers in justice and charity. All the more so after the Second Vatican Council and the *Motu Proprio Sollicitudo omnium Ecclesiarum*, of 24 June 1969 (A.A.S. 61, 1969, pp. 473-484) are we happy to confirm these concepts, already well-known in themselves, while we are here with you, young priests, intended for this service, if God wills and if you have the necessary requisites.

Both in the determination that sustains your efforts today in preparing for future tasks, and in the situations that you will find tomorrow in your respective places of work, remember, always remember, that you will be all the more successful in what is asked of you the more deeply and truly you live your priesthood. The Holy See diplomat is first and foremost and above all a priest: he has no illusions, especially today, of a comfortable life, of privileges, far less of human grandeur. As we said in 1951, on the occasion of the celebrations for the 250th anniversary of the foundation of the Academy, "if diplomacy has a defect, an attraction, a fascination of doubtful value, it is that of presenting itself as an easy career... All this is presented, it is true, to the student of the Academy: but it is presented as a scale of responsibilities: the more you rise, the more you will serve; and remember that to rise means having the weight of new responsibilities; and bear in mind what representing means: it means giving, exposing oneself for Another: *oportet me minui, illum autem crescere*; in proportion as you rise, you will tremble at your mission and you will have to mingle with player and humility the exercise of the functions that are delegated to you".

This, beloved sons, is what you will be called to give. If the Apostle's expression "impendam, et superimpendam" (2 Cor 12:15) must be the wing of every priestly life, all the more must it invite you, whose figure, whose function, whose very *raison d'être* is precisely to dedicate yourselves, to spend yourselves, to wear yourselves out for Christ the Saviour and for his Kingdom which is the Church; the Church which is in the world – and, in that part of the world where each of you will be – where it plays and works, hopes and suffers, lives and spreads in the hearts and in the institutions of men. *Impendam et superimpendam*. This is your programme, your ambition, your glory.

We wish to the priests who are about to leave, fulfilment of this ideal in the work – and how much there is! – which now awaits them in the immediate future; and we wish all you students the same,

so that you may have very clear ideas in carrying on your studies, and be able to draw the consequences. We are close to you, as we are to other priests, the apple of our eye, and even more so, and we pray for you everyday. “God is my witness” – we will say with St Paul—“how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ” (*Phil 1:9 f.*). We also thank the worthy teaching staff, and above all Mons. the President, for the work they carry out for your benefit and that of the Church, And we bless you all, in nomine Domini.

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\*ORa n.12 p.1.