



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

TO A GROUP OF PRIESTS FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE OF BOLOGNA LED BY ARCHBISHOP

CARDINAL POMA Thursday, 19 April 1979 Lord Cardinal,

The meeting this morning is gladdened by these young priests of your archdiocese, on whom you laid hands in the course of the last decade. It seems to me I can read on your face the legitimate pride of a father who sees himself surrounded by a large and strong group of sons, on whom he knows he can rely for the present and for the future. Let my cordial greeting go to you, therefore, Lord Cardinal, and to these priests of yours, with an open and sincere welcome. It always gives me special joy to be able to talk to priests, because it seems to me I can at once find myself in agreement with them owing to the ideals, hopes, joyful and sad experiences, in a word, the vocation which, by providential divine disposition, unites us. The spontaneous desire I feel in these cases would be to listen to the problems of each one, to ask questions about apostolic initiatives, the difficulties met with, the results obtained, projects for the future. I would then like to be able to converse, in brotherly communion of spirit, about the mystery of divine election, the greatness of the mission to which we are called, and the formidable responsibilities which we bear. To talk about them in order to revive in us awareness of the irreplaceable role that the ministerial priesthood must carry out in service of the People of God. I entrusted some thoughts on this fundamental ecclesial function of ours to the [Letter](#) which I addressed to all priests on the occasion of the recent liturgical celebration of Holy Thursday. I trust that it was received by you, beloved sons, with the same open-heartedness with which I wrote it; and I hope that your attentive, intelligent, available reflection will dwell on it, so that it may strengthen and spur each one of you to persevere joyfully in the donation of himself to Christ and to the Church. I would like here just to note that there are two requirements particularly felt by the clergy, especially the young: the demand for authenticity and the demand for closeness to the man of our times. They are two exigencies worthy of great consideration, because they express a sincere desire for consistency with one's own mission. Glancing through the text of the above-mentioned [Letter](#), you will have found that I indicated in likeness to Christ, "the Good Shepherd," the most valid criterion of priestly authenticity (cf. n. 5), and in the commitment to offer others the testimony of a priestly personality that is for everyone "a clear and plain sign and indication" (cf. n. 7), the most effective way of effecting a "significant" presence among modern men. It is not, in fact, by giving in to the promptings of an easy secularization, expressed either in the abandonment of the ecclesiastical habit, or in the assimilation of worldly habits, or in the taking up of a secular trade, it is not in this way that we can approach modern man effectively. This assimilation might perhaps give, at first sight, the impression of an immediacy of contacts; but what use would it be if it were to be "paid for" with loss of the specific evangelizing and sanctifying charge, which makes the priest the salt of the earth and the light of the world? The risk that the salt may lose its taste or the light be smothered is already clearly put forward by Jesus in the Gospel (cf. Mt 5:13-16). What would be the use of a priest so "assimilated" to the world as to become a camouflaged part of it and no longer a transforming leaven? These are—I am sure—also your convictions; and it is for this reason that to be able to contemplate such a fine and promising group of

young priests, closely gathered round their Bishop, fills my soul with joy. Thanking you again, therefore, for this visit of yours, in which I see the attestation of an intense desire for ever closer communion with Peter's Successor, I willingly assure you of a special memory at the Altar of the Lord, and in his Name I bestow upon you all my fatherly Apostolic Blessing, which can be extended to your families and to the souls entrusted to your generous ministry. © Copyright 1979
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