



# The Holy See

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## APOSTOLIC JOURNEY

### TO THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC,

### MEXICO AND THE BAHAMAS **MEETING WITH THE SEMINARIANS OF MEXICO** **ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II** *Major Seminary of Guadalajara*

*Tuesday, 30 January 1979*

*Dear Seminarians, Diocesan and Religious, of Mexico,* May the peace of the Lord be with you always! The exuberant and affectionate enthusiasm with which you have received me this afternoon, moves me deeply. I feel an immense joy on sharing with you these moments which confirm beyond any doubt, on your side, the appreciation you feel before God for the Pope; and this instils in me consolation and new courage (cf. 2 Cor 7:13). Through you, my inner joy extends to my dear Brothers in the Episcopate, to priests, religious and to all the faithful. Let my deepest gratitude go to all for so many attentions and for such filial cordiality, and even more for remembering me in their prayers to the Lord. I can assure you that your unanimous response to this "pastoral visit" of mine to Mexico, has given form in me, during these days, to a welcome presentiment. I will express it in the words of the Apostle: "I rejoice, because I have perfect confidence in you." (2 Cor 7:16.)<sup>1</sup> It is a motive of satisfaction for me to know that Mexican seminaries have a long and glorious tradition which goes back to the times of the Council of Trent, with the foundation of the College "San Pedro" in this city of Guadalajara, in 1570. In the course of time, many other centres of priestly formation, scattered all over the national territory, were added to this one, as a persistent proof of a fresh and vigorous ecclesial vitality. I do not want to pass over in silence the already centenarian Mexican College in Rome. It has a very important mission: to keep alive the bond between Mexico and the Pope's Chair. I consider it the indispensable duty of all to help it and sustain it, so that it can carry out this fundamental task in full faithfulness to the norms of the Magisterium and to the guidelines given by Peter's See. This historical concern to create new seminaries arouses in me feelings of satisfaction and approval; but what particularly fills me with hope is the continual flourishing of priestly and religious vocations. I feel happy to see you here, young people overflowing with joy, because you have answered "yes" to the Lord's invitation to serve him, body and soul, in the Church, in the ministerial priesthood. Like St Paul, I wish to throw my heart wide open to you, to say to you, "Our heart is wide... In return... widen your hearts also" (2 Cor 6:11-13).<sup>2</sup> Just over two months ago, when I had just begun my Pontificate, I

had a *eucharistic audience* with the seminarians of Rome. As I did then, today I invite you, too, to listen carefully to the Lord who speaks to the heart, especially in prayer and in the liturgy, to discover and to root in the depths of your being the meaning and the value of your vocation. God who is truth and love, manifested himself to us in the history of creation and in the history of salvation: a history that is still incomplete, that of mankind, which "waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God" (cf. Rom 8:18 f.). The same God chose us, called us to instil new strength into this history, already knowing that salvation "is the gift of God, [coming] not because of works, we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:8-10). A history, therefore, which is in God's plans, and is also ours, because God wishes us to be workers in the vineyard (cf. Mt 20:1-16); he wants us to be ambassadors to go and meet everyone and invite everyone to his banquet (Mt 22:1-14); he wants us to be Good Samaritans who have pity on our unfortunate neighbour (Lk 10:30 ff.).<sup>3</sup> This would already be enough to see from closer up how great is the vocation. To experience it is a unique event, inexpressible, perceived only as a sweet breath through the awakening touch of grace: a breath of the Spirit who, while he gives a real form to our frail human reality — a clay vessel in the hands of the potter (Rom 9:20-21) — also lights in our hearts a new light, instils an extraordinary strength which, consolidating us in love, incorporates our existence with the work of God, with his plan of *re-creating* man in Christ, that is, the formation of his new redeemed family. You are therefore, called to construct the church — communion with God — something far above what one can ask or imagine (cf. Eph 3:14-21).

4. Dear Seminarians, who one day will be ministers of God to plant and water the Lord's field, take advantage of these years in the seminary to fill yourselves with the feelings of Christ himself, in study, prayer, obedience, and the formation of your character. In this way, you will yourselves see how, in proportion as your vocation matures in this school, your life will joyfully assume a specific character, a precise indication: the orientation towards others, like Christ, who "went about doing good and healing all" (Acts 10:38). In this way, what might seem a misfortune on the human plane, is transformed into a luminous project of life, already examined and approved by Jesus: to live not to be served but to serve (Mt 20:28). As you well understand, nothing is further from the vocation than the incentive of earthly advantages, than pursuit of benefits or honours; and the vocation is also very far from being escape from an environment of frustrated hopes or from one which is hostile or alienating. The good news, for him who is called to service of the people of God, in addition to being a call to change and improve one's own existence, is also a call to a life already transformed in Christ, who must be proclaimed and spread. Let that suffice, dear Seminarians. You will be able to add the rest yourselves, with your open and generous hearts. I want to add just one thing: love your directors, educators, and superiors. On them there falls the agreeable but difficult task of leading you by the hand along the way that goes to the priesthood. They will help you to acquire a taste for interior life, for the demanding habit of renunciation for Christ, and for disinterestedness; above all, they will infect you with "the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ" (cf. 2 Cor 2:14). Do not be afraid. The Lord is with you, and at every moment he is our best guarantee: "I know whom I have believed" (2 Tim 1:12). With this trust in the Lord, open your hearts to the action of the Holy Spirit; open them in a resolution of dedication that knows no reservations; open them to the world which is expecting you and needs you; open them to the call already addressed

to you by so many souls, to whom, one day, you will be able to give Christ, in the Eucharist, in Penance, in the preaching of the revealed Word, in friendly and disinterested advice, in the serene testimony of your lives as men who are in the world without being of the world. It is worth dedicating oneself to the cause of Christ, who wants valiant and decided hearts; it is worth devoting oneself to man for Christ, in order to bring him to Him, to raise him, to help him on his way to eternity; it is worth making an option for an ideal that will give you great joys, even if at the same time it demands a good many sacrifices. The Lord does not abandon his followers. For the Kingdom, it is worth living this precious value of Christianity, priestly celibacy, the centuries-old heritage of the Church; it is worth living it in a responsible way, although it calls for a good many sacrifices. Cultivate devotion to Mary, the Virgin Mother of the Son of God, so that she may help you and urge you to carry it out fully! But I would also like to reserve a special word for you, educators and superiors of houses of formation to the priesthood. You have a treasure of the Church in your hands. Look after it with the greatest attention and diligence, so that it may produce the hoped-for fruits. Form these young men to wholesome joy, cultivating a rich personality adapted to our time. But form this personality staunch in the faith, in the principles of the Gospel, in awareness of the value of souls, in the spirit of prayer, capable of facing up to the onslaughts of the future. Do not shorten the vertical view of life, do not lower the exigencies that the option for Christ imposes. If we propose ideals that are distorted, the young will be the first not to want them, because they desire something that is worthwhile, an ideal that is worthy of an existence: although there is a price to pay. You who are responsible for vocations, priests, religious, fathers and mothers of families. I address these words to you. Commit yourselves generously to the task of procuring new vocations, so important for the future of the Church. The shortage of vocations calls for a responsible effort to remedy it. And this will not be obtained if we are not able to pray, if we are not able to give the vocation to the diocesan or religious priesthood the appreciation and the esteem it deserves. Young Seminarians! I give all of you my blessing. Christ is waiting for you. You cannot disappoint him.

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