



The Holy See

FEAST OF OUR LADY OF CONFIDENCE

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II

Saturday, 9 February 2002

1. I thank the Lord who, this year, has again given me the joy of passing the *feast of Our Lady of Confidence* with you. This has become a family appointment, looked forward to and appreciated, that allows us to thank the heavenly Mother of God for her constant assistance to the Roman Seminary, the heart of our Diocese.

I would like to make my own the words of the great writer, Alessandro Manzoni, that you have chosen as the theme of today's solemn meeting: "O Virgin, All Holy Lady, what beautiful names every language has for you! More than one proud people boasts of being under your gentle protection" (*Inni Sacri, Il nome di Maria*).

I greet you all in the name of the Blessed Virgin. I first greet the Cardinal Vicar and the Bishops present; I greet your rector and the priests who work with him. I greet the alumni, the friends of the Seminary, the young people and all who are taking part in this festive occasion. I greet you especially, dear students, who are invited today to reflect under the gaze of Our Lady of Confidence on the importance of your journey of formation with a view to your future mission in the Church.

2. The oratorio composed by Mons. Marco Frisina, inspired by the noble and beloved figure of Bl. John XXIII, the good Pope, who was also a student of your seminary, fits very well into the joyful atmosphere of this Saturday. His heart filled with confidence, Angelo Roncalli, like you, prepared with zeal for the various tasks that God was later to entrust to him. Today I would like to stress his yearning for holiness, that in his life became a daily programme. His optimism was tenacious, especially in the face of real problems and difficulties. Strong in his faith, he invited everyone to realize that what unites the disciples of the Lord, and in general, all men, is far greater than what

effectively divides them.

In this spirit he favoured the ecumenical approach, that has obtained great results even if much still remains to be done. At his school, every Christian is invited to become a docile instrument, learning from him, so that Christ's burning prayer in the Upper Room may be fulfilled: "that they all may be one so that the world may believe" (Jn 17,21).

3. On this special occasion it is also given to us to recall, together with Bl. John XXIII, his immediate Successor, the Servant of God Paul VI. In fact, on the occasion of the renewal of the main chapel of your seminary, in his memory an artistic crucifix was set up that is the work of the sculptor Enrico Manfrini and a gift of the beloved Bishop Pasquale Macchi. May this outstanding symbol of our faith help you in every situation to keep your gaze fixed, as Pope Paul VI did, on the mystery of Christ, who died and rose for us.

4. Then how can I overlook another cause of joy and encouragement for you, dear seminarians? Last 20 December, I published the decree of heroic virtues of an alumnus of this institution, the seminarian Bruno Marchesini. Please God, seminarians too will soon have their own special patron and model to inspire them during their journey of priestly formation. It is wonderful that it should be the seminary of the Church of Rome itself, whose Bishop is the Successor of the Apostle Peter, that is offering as a gift to seminarians across the world a flawless model of faith and virtue, an exemplary friend to imitate, to feel beside them in every circumstance. I am sure that looking to him will be an incentive for each one of you to follow Jesus faithfully. May the Spirit who inspired young Marchesini also guide you, dear friends, on the path of heroic faith, so that you may prepare yourselves for taking the Gospel wherever Providence leads you, if necessary even to the ends of the earth (cf. Acts 1,8).

5. I now address you, dear young men, who come as you do every year to spend an intense day of spirituality with the seminary community! May the figures we have just recalled and the example of their virtues also inspire you to be saints. Holiness is the precious heritage they have bequeathed to us; holiness is the principal point of every missionary programme, as I took the chance to recall in my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte*, (cf. nn. 30-31).

Move without pause towards this challenging and majestic peak, treasuring the grace dispensed to you every day and seeking to express it in zeal for good resolutions and courageous actions. This is the mission of every ecclesial community; it must be the main concern of every believer. May Christ be at the centre of it all: to be known, loved and served generously with an open and generous heart.

Holiness is a gift, but also a conquest: it is the gift that God offers his children, sharing his own life with them and calling them to deep communion with him. At the same time, it is a response to this gift, and a laborious conquest to be realized all the time.

6. Thank you so much for this Oratorio. It made me recall even moments of my life, especially the inauguration of the Second Vatican Council in which Providence allowed me to participate personally. It evoked the person of the Pope: Pope John who opened the solemn Conciliar assembly and who died a few months later. All of this came back as I followed the voices of the Oratorio, the music of the orchestra and the singing of the chorale. Thank you, Marco, thank you very much for such a great gift.

At the end of his visit the Holy Father said.

Thank you for the invitation to this delightful evening in the Roman Seminary, that we in passed front of Our Lady of Confidence. We heard how Our Lady of Confidence guided the steps of Pope John XXIII on a path that brought him from this Seminary to the Second Vatican Council, which was also a great seminary, the seminary of the bishops of the world. Let us thank Our Lady of Confidence for all that she did to assist Pope John in the preparation for and in the adventure of the Second Vatican Council. I wish all of you the grace to find her guidance in your lives: from the image of Our Lady of Confidence to the goals that Providence foresees for you and even asks of you to be accomplished through you. Once again, thank you for this wonderful evening. Many thanks.