



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE STUDENTS AND TEACHERS  
OF THE ALMO COLLEGIO CAPRANICA**

*Saturday, 19 January 2002*

*Your Eminence,*

*Dear Superiors and Students of the Capranica College,*

1. I am delighted to speak to you at our traditional annual appointment, before the liturgical memorial of St Agnes, your special Patroness, and I cordially welcome you. First of all, I want to greet Cardinal Camillo Ruini, President of the Episcopal Commission appointed to conduct the college, and I thank him for his courteous words expressing your common sentiments. I greet the Rector, Mons. Michele Pennisi, the superiors, and you, students of the Capranica community. Your college, witness to a centuries long bond with the Apostolic See and with the Successor of Peter, is one of the most ancient and distinguished institutions for the formation of candidates to the priesthood, who not only come from the Diocese of Rome, but also from other dioceses in Italy and other countries of the world.

2. Dear students, it is to you that I want to speak in a special way. You are called to become witnesses and "examples to the flock" (I Pt 5,3) that will be entrusted to you. And to be such, you must acquire the inner dispositions and virtuous behaviour that are the basis of priestly spirituality. Christ himself is the model of this important spiritual and intellectual growth. Indeed, "*through that sacrament [Orders] priests by the anointing of the Holy Spirit are signed with a special character and so are configured to Christ the priest in such a way that they are able to act in the person of Christ*" (*Presbyterorum ordinis*, n. 2). Precisely because they are required to follow the Teacher more closely, they must "unceasingly contemplate his face" (*Novo Millennio ineunte*, n. 16). Therefore, conscious of your future mission, tend to holiness and strive to spread Christ's love everywhere. Be faithful to the Church and within her always work in communion with your Bishops. Indeed, the priest is not a man of isolated and independent initiatives; he is a minister of the

Gospel in the name of the Church. All his apostolic activity starts from the Church and returns to the Church.

If at times this mission can seem difficult to you, do not be afraid! Learn from these years of training to put out into the deep, your sails open to the breath of the Holy Spirit. In this way you will be happy with all the Lord will do through you and, even in the midst of trials and problems, you will experience the greatness and joy of your mission.

3. May your college community remain in a permanent attitude of listening to the Word of God. May it deepen those bonds of communion that help each one of you to go out in your evangelizing mission to the world. May you live intensely your experience of community. It will become the supporting structure of your whole life. Indeed, you are called to live and be with others and for others.

Jesus laid down clear conditions for those who intend to follow him: *"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his Cross daily and follow me"* (Lk 9,23). Jesus was not a Messiah of triumph and power. As a true Servant of the Lord, he carried out his messianic mission in solidarity, in service, in the humiliation of death. Walk courageously behind him and continue confidently, renewing your fidelity to Christ every day, and your openness to the needs of your brothers and sisters.

May the example and intercession of the saints and martyrs who were ever faithful to the Lord sustain you in this effort. May the saints of our Church of Rome protect you in particular, especially the young girl so dear to you, St Agnes, who, with her witness of virginity and martyrdom, invites you to follow the Lamb who gave himself for the salvation of the world. May Mary, Mother of the Church be with you, and obtain for each one of you a year rich in spiritual and cultural fruit.

With these sentiments, I impart a special Apostolic Blessing to you, students present here, to your superiors and masters of formation and to the entire family of the Capranica.