



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS
FROM THE ECCLESIASTICAL UNIVERSITIES OF ROME***

St Peter's Basilica

Thursday, 25 October 2007

Your Eminences,

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I thank the Lord who this year too has granted me the possibility of meeting the teachers and students of the Pontifical and Ecclesiastical Universities present in Rome. It is a gathering for prayer - the celebration of Holy Mass which constitutes the fulcrum of our entire life as Christians has just ended - and at the same time, a favourable opportunity to reflect on the meaning and value of your experience of studying here in Rome, in the heart of Christendom. I extend to each one of you my affectionate greeting, which I address in the first place to Cardinal Zenon Grocholewski, Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education, and I thank him for his kind words on behalf of you all. I also greet Cardinal Dias and the other Prelates present, the Rectors of the Universities and Members of the respective Academic Bodies, those in charge and the Superiors of Seminaries and Colleges, as well as the students who come from almost every part of the world.

Dear friends, the annual event here in the Vatican Basilica, which reunites in spirit the whole Academic family of the Roman Ecclesiastical Universities, enables you to perceive more clearly the unique experience of communion and brotherhood which you can have in these years. If this experience is to be fruitful it needs the contribution of each and every one. Together, you have taken part in the Eucharistic Celebration and you will be spending this new year together. Try to create an atmosphere among yourselves in which the commitment to study and brotherly cooperation are a common enrichment for you, not only with regard to the cultural, scientific and doctrinal aspects, but also the human and spiritual dimensions. May you learn to make the most of

the opportunities in this regard which are offered to you in Rome, a truly unique city also from this point of view.

Rome is rich in historical memorials, masterpieces of art and culture; it is above all full of eloquent Christian testimonies. In the course of time, Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties, now more than a century old, came into being, where entire generations of priests and pastoral workers have been formed, among whom great saints and important men of the Church are not lacking. You are following in their footsteps, dedicating important years of your life to acquire a deeper knowledge of various humanistic and theological disciplines. The purposes of these worthy institutions, as beloved John Paul II wrote in 1979 in his Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana*, are among other things: "through scientific research to cultivate and promote their own disciplines, and especially to deepen knowledge of Christian revelation and of matters connected with it, to enunciate systematically the truths contained therein, to consider in the light of revelation the most recent progress of the sciences and to present them to the people of the present day in a manner adapted to various cultures" (Section I, art. 3 1). This commitment is more urgently needed than ever in our post-modern age in which we feel the need for a new evangelization that requires properly trained teachers of the faith and heralds and witnesses of the Gospel.

In fact, your stay in Rome can and must serve to prepare you to carry out in the best possible way the task that awaits you in the various fields of apostolic action. The evangelizing mission proper to the Church in our time not only requires that the Gospel message be disseminated everywhere, but also that it penetrate deeply peoples' ways of thinking and criteria of judgment and behaviour. In a word, the entire culture of contemporary man must be permeated with the Gospel. The multiplicity of the subjects taught at the Athenaeums and Study Centres that you attend intends to respond to this vast and urgent cultural and spiritual challenge. May the possibility of studying in Rome, the See of the Successor of Peter and hence of the Petrine ministry, help you to reinforce your sense of belonging to the Church and your commitment of fidelity to the Pope's universal Magisterium. In addition, the presence in the academic Institutions and in the Colleges and Seminaries of teachers and students from every continent offers you a further opportunity to be acquainted with one another and to experience the beauty of belonging to the one, large family of God: may you know how to make the very most of it!

Dear brothers and sisters, it is indispensable that the study of the humanistic and theological sciences always be accompanied by a gradual, intimate and profound knowledge of Christ. This entails combining a sincere desire for holiness with your necessary concern for study and research. Therefore, in addition to being a serious and persevering intellectual commitment, may these years of formation in Rome be first and foremost a time of intense prayer, in constant harmony with the divine Teacher who has chosen you for his service. Likewise, may contact with the religious and social reality of the city be useful to you for a spiritual and pastoral enrichment. Let us invoke the intercession of Mary, the docile and wise Mother, so that she may help you to be ready in every circumstance to recognize the voice of the Lord, who safeguards you and

accompanies you on your journey of formation and at every moment in your life. I assure you of my remembrance in prayer, and as I wish you a peaceful and fruitful year, I corroborate these wishes with a special Apostolic Blessing.

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