



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE COMMUNITY
OF THE PONTIFICAL ECCLESIASTICAL ACADEMY***

Hall of the Popes

Saturday, 23 May 2009

Your Excellency,

Dear Brother Priests,

It is a renewed joy for me to greet you all who have come this year too, to show the Successor of Peter your affection and faithfulness. I greet Archbishop Beniamino Stella, President of the [Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy](#), and thank him for the words he has courteously addressed to me, as well as for the service he carries out with great dedication. I greet his collaborators, the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Child Jesus and all of you who in these years of your youth are preparing to serve the Church and her universal Pastor, in a unique ministry, which is, precisely, that carried out in the Papal Representations.

Indeed service in the Apostolic Nunciatures may be considered, to a certain extent, a specific priestly vocation, a pastoral ministry that involves a special integration in the world and in its often quite complex social and political problems. It is therefore important that you learn to decipher them, knowing that the "code", so to speak, for the analysis and understanding of these dynamics can only be the Gospel and the perennial Magisterium of the Church. You must learn to interpret human and social realities carefully, on the basis of a certain personal perception, which every servant of the Holy See must possess, and putting to good use the specific experience you will acquire during these years. In addition, that capacity for dialogue with modernity which is required of you, as well as contact with people and the institutions that they represent, demand a robust inner structure and spiritual solidity that can safeguard and indeed highlight better and better your Christian and priestly identity. Only in this way will you be able to avoid suffering the negative effects of the modern mindset and not let yourselves be attracted or contaminated by the pressure of earthly logic.

Since it is the Lord himself who asks you to carry out this mission in the Church, through the summons of your Bishop who points you out and makes you available to the Holy See, it is to the Lord himself that you must always and above all refer. In moments of darkness and inner difficulty, turn your gaze to Christ who lovingly fixed his eyes on you one day and called you to be with him and to work, at his school, for his Kingdom. Always remember that it is essential and fundamental, for the priestly ministry in whatever way it is exercised, to keep a personal tie with Jesus. He wants us to be his "friends", friends who seek intimacy with him, who follow his teachings and strive to make him known to and loved by all. The Lord wants us, that is, all "his own", to be holy, not concerned to build ourselves a humanly interesting or comfortable career, seeking neither public applause nor success, but rather entirely dedicated to the good of souls, ready to carry out our duty to the very end, in the knowledge that we are "useless servants", glad to be able to offer our poor contribution to spreading the Gospel.

Dear priests, may you be, in the first place, men of intense prayer, who cultivate a communion of love and life with the Lord. Without this sound spiritual basis, how could you persevere in your ministry? Those who work in this way in the Lord's vineyard know that what they do with dedication, sacrifice and love is never wasted. And if at times we are given to taste the cup of loneliness, misunderstanding and suffering, if service seems at times a burden to us and the cross is sometimes heavy to carry, may the certainty that God knows how to make all things fruitful sustain and comfort us. We know that the dimension of the Cross, vividly symbolized in the parable of the ear of wheat which, having fallen to the ground dies to bear fruit an image that Jesus used shortly before his Passion is an essential part of every person's life and every apostolic mission. In every situation we must offer the joyful witness of our adherence to the Gospel, accepting the Apostle Paul's invitation to boast only of the Cross of Christ, with the sole ambition of completing in ourselves what is lacking in the Passion of the Lord, for the sake of his Body, that is the Church (cf. Col 1: 24).

The Year for Priests, that will begin next 19 June, the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart and a Day of Priestly Sanctification, is a particularly valuable opportunity for renewing and reinforcing your generous response to the Lord's call, for intensifying your relationship with him. May you make the very most of this opportunity to be priests according to Christ's Heart, like St John Mary Vianney, the Holy Curé d'Ars, the 150th anniversary of whose death we are preparing to celebrate. I entrust these wishes and hopes to his intercession and to that of St Anthony Abbot, Patron of the Academy. May Mary, Mother of the Church watch maternally over you and protect you. As for me, while I thank you for today's visit, I assure you of my special remembrance in prayer and cordially impart the Apostolic Blessing to each one of you, to the reverend Sisters, to the personnel of the House and to all your loved ones.

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