



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI TO ROMAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Vatican Basilica

Thursday, 15 December 2005

*Venerable Brothers,
Distinguished Academic Authorities,
Dear Students,*

With great joy I offer you all my cordial greeting at the end of the traditional pre-Christmas celebration of the Eucharist for students of the *Athenaeums* of Rome, which was so dear to my beloved Predecessor John Paul II.

In the first place I greet the Cardinal Vicar who presided at Holy Mass, and with him, I greet the other ecclesiastics present. I thank each one of you, dear friends, for having accepted the invitation to take part in this meeting, and I express my gratitude in particular to the Minister of Education, Universities and Research, the Rectors of the *Athenaeums* of Rome and of Italy, the Directors of the Conservatories, the university chaplains and the student delegations from several European countries and from Africa.

I am also pleased on this occasion to welcome those taking part in the World Congress of Pastoral Care for Foreign Students, organized by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People. I address an affectionate welcome to everyone.

I gladly take this opportunity to express deep pleasure at the growing collaboration among the various *Athenaeums* of Rome. Continue together, dear friends, to reflect on the new humanism, mindful of the great challenges of our time and seeking to combine faith and culture harmoniously.

How necessary it is at this moment in history to encourage attentive cultural and spiritual research!

I also learned with pleasure that the city's five Faculties of Medicine have agreed to commit themselves in several areas to collaborating on life themes.

Then, at a more specifically pastoral level, I appreciated the decision to study in depth the subject of the transmission of faith through a process of formation that involves both students and teachers.

Dear young people, of whom I see a large number, I hope that you will undertake your journey of Christian formation joyfully, combining it with a daily effort to deepen your knowledge of the respective academic courses. You must rediscover the beauty of having Christ as your Teacher of life and thus succeed, freely and consciously, in renewing your profession of faith.

I would now like to turn my attention to the foreign students. Their presence is a growing phenomenon and is an important field of pastoral action for the Church. Indeed, young people who leave their own country in order to study encounter many problems and especially the risk of an identity crisis and a loss of spiritual and moral values.

Moreover, for many young people the possibility of studying abroad is a unique opportunity to become better able to contribute to the development of their own countries and participate actively in the Church's mission. It is important to continue on the journey undertaken to meet the needs of these brothers and sisters of ours.

Dear university friends, we are approaching the great and evocative event of Holy Christmas. The typical atmosphere of this feast invites us to be close and to rejoice. As I hope that those who can will celebrate the Christmas festivities at home in great serenity, I ask you to accept in its fullness the spiritual message that this Solemnity presents anew to us. God became Man, he came to dwell among us. Let us prepare our hearts to welcome the One who comes to save us with the gift of his life, which makes him one of us, makes him close to us, and he becomes our brother.

May Mary Most Holy, *Sedes Sapientiae*, guide you as you wait. Her Icon, which is visiting various nations, is now being handed over by the delegation of Poland to the delegation of Bulgaria, to continue its *peregrinatio* [pilgrimage] to the university cities of that Country. May she, the faithful Virgin, the Mother of Christ, obtain the light of divine Wisdom, Christ the Lord, for each one of you and for your academic milieus.

A Merry Christmas to you all!

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