



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI TO NEWLY APPOINTED BISHOPS

Monday, 19 September 2005

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

I greet you with affection and with Christ's greeting to the Apostles: "*Peace be with you!*".

At the beginning of your episcopal ministry you have come on pilgrimage to the Tomb of St Peter to renew your faith, to think about your responsibilities as successors of the Apostles and to express your communion with the Pope.

The study days organized for recently-appointed Bishops are now a traditional event and give you the opportunity to consider certain important aspects of the episcopal ministry in a brotherly exchange of thoughts and experiences.

This meeting is one of the projects in the continuing formation of the Bishop recommended in the Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Gregis*. Although there are many reasons that require the Bishop to keep up-to-date, it is especially useful for a Bishop at the beginning of his mission to have an adequate period to reflect on the challenges and problems that await him.

These days also enable you to become personally acquainted with one another and give you a practical experience of the collegial affection that must animate your ministry.

I thank Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re for having interpreted your sentiments. I cordially greet Archbishop Antonio Vegliò, Secretary of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches. I am glad that the Eastern-rite Bishops took part in this event together with their Latin-rite confreres, as well as planning some special meetings in the above-mentioned Dicastery for the Oriental Churches.

As you take your first steps in the episcopal office, you have already realized the great need for humble trust in God and for the apostolic courage that is born from the faith and from the Bishop's sense of responsibility.

The Apostle Paul knew this; in setting about his pastoral work he placed his hope in the Lord alone, recognizing that his power came only from the Lord. Indeed, he said: "In him who is the source of my strength I have strength for everything" (Phil 4: 13).

Each one of you, dear Brothers, must have the assurance that in carrying out your ministry you are never alone, for the Lord is close to you with his grace and his presence, as we are reminded by the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, in which Christ the Saviour's presence is reaffirmed in the person and ministerial action of the Bishop (cf. n. 21).

Among your tasks, I would like to stress your duty to be Teachers of the faith.

The proclamation of the Gospel is at the origin of the Church and her development throughout the world and also of the growth in faith of the faithful. The Apostles were fully aware of the priority of this service of theirs: in order to be fully available for the ministry of the Word, they chose deacons whom they delegated for charitable service (Acts 6: 2-4).

As successors of the Apostles, dear Brothers, you are *doctores fidei*, authentic doctors who with Christ's own authority proclaim to the people the faith they must believe and live. You must help those entrusted to your pastoral care to rediscover the joy of faith, the delight of being personally loved by God, who gave his Son Jesus for our salvation.

Indeed, as you well know, believing consists in entrusting ourselves to God, who knows and loves us personally, and in accepting the Truth he has revealed in Christ with the confidence that leads us to trust in him, the Revealer of the Father. He loves us despite our shortcomings and sins and his love gives meaning to our lives and to the life of the world.

Answering God requires the believer to make that inner journey which leads him or her to an encounter with the Lord. The encounter is only possible if the person can open his or her heart to God, who speaks in the depths of the conscience.

This requires interiority, silence, and watchfulness, dispositions that I ask you to propose to your faithful too, as well as living them yourselves, seeking to arrange initiatives at suitable times and places that will help them discover the primacy of the spiritual life.

On the last Solemnity of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, I presented to the Church the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, a faithful and reliable synthesis of the full earlier text.

Today, I present in spirit to each one of you these two fundamental Documents of the Church's faith. They will serve as a reference point for your teaching and as a sign of the communion of faith that we live.

The dialogical style of the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the use of images are intended to help each member of the faithful respond directly to God's call which echoes in their consciences, in order to establish an intimate and personal conversation with him.

This dialogue is extended to the community in liturgical prayer, expressed in formulas and rites that have a beauty of their own which encourages the contemplation of God's mysteries. Thus, the *lex credendi* becomes the *lex orandi*.

I urge you to be close to your priests and also to the many catechists in your Dioceses who help you in your ministry: please convey my greeting and encouragement to each one of them.

Do your utmost to make the Year of the Eucharist, now drawing to a close, leave in the hearts of the faithful a desire to root their lives ever more deeply in the Eucharist.

May the Eucharist also be for you the inspiring force of your pastoral ministry. The very way in which the Bishop celebrates Mass nourishes the faith and devotion of his priests and faithful. And every Bishop, as "the first steward of God's mysteries", is responsible for the Eucharist in his Diocese: that is, it is his task to ensure that the celebration of the Eucharist is dignified and decorous, and to promote Eucharistic worship.

Every Bishop, then, must take special care concerning the participation of the faithful in Sunday Mass, in which the Word of life rings out and Christ makes himself present under the species of bread and wine. The Mass, in addition, enables the faithful to nourish the community sense of faith.

Dear Brothers, may you have deep confidence in grace and be able to imbue this confidence in those who work with you, so that the precious pearl of the faith may always be shining, safeguarded, protected and passed on with its purity.

I invoke Mary's protection upon each one of you and upon your Dioceses, as I impart my heartfelt Blessing to each and every one.

