



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE STUDENTS OF ROME'S OLDEST SEMINARY
THE ALMO COLLEGIO CAPRANICA**

*Sala Clementina
Friday, 20 January 2006*

*Your Eminence,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Students of the Almo Collegio Capranica,*

I am pleased to greet you at this special Audience on the eve of the liturgical Memorial of St Agnes, your heavenly Patroness. I am meeting you for the first time after my election to the Chair of the Apostle Peter and I gladly make the most of this opportunity to address a cordial greeting to you all.

First of all, I would like to greet Cardinal Camillo Ruini and the other Prelates who make up the Episcopal Commission that directs your College; I greet the Rector, Mons. Ermenegildo Manicardi, and the other formation teachers; I greet you, dear young men who are training to exercise the priestly ministry. You are here at a very important period in your life, which is that of your formation, an appropriate time for human, cultural and spiritual growth.

Dear young men, the College's organization helps you to prepare yourselves in the best way for your future pastoral mission: prayer, recollection, study, community life and the support of the formation staff. You can benefit from the fact that your Seminary, rich in history, is integrated into the life of the Diocese of Rome, and the cultivation of its strong bond of fidelity to the Bishop of Rome has always been a commitment and the boast of the Capranica Family.

Moreover, the possibility of doing your theological studies in this City also affords you a special opportunity for growth and openness to the needs of the universal Church. May it be your concern in these years to make the most of every occasion to witness effectively to the Gospel among the

people of our time.

To respond to the expectations of modern society and cooperate in the vast evangelizing action that involves all Christians, we need well-trained and courageous priests who are free from ambition and fear but convinced of the Gospel Truth, whose chief concern is to proclaim Christ and who are prepared to stoop down to suffering humanity in his Name, enabling everyone, particularly the poor and all who are in difficulty, to experience the comfort of God's love and the warmth of the ecclesial family.

As you well know, in addition to human maturity and persevering adherence to the revealed truth which is faithfully presented by the Church's Magisterium, this entails a serious commitment to personal holiness and the practice of the virtues, especially humility and charity; you must also foster communion with the various members of the People of God, so that in each one of you the awareness of being part of the one Body of Christ and members one of another (cf. Rom 12: 4-6) may grow.

To achieve this, dear friends, I ask you to keep your eyes fixed on Christ, the Author and Perfecter of faith (cf. Heb 12: 2). Indeed, the greater your communion with him, the better able you will be to follow faithfully in his footsteps, so that, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, your love for the Lord will develop in "love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony" (Col 3: 14).

You have before your eyes the testimonies of zealous priests whom your "Almo" College has listed among its alumnae through the years, priests who contributed a wealth of knowledge and goodness to the Lord's Vineyard. Follow their example!

Dear friends, the Pope accompanies you with prayer, asking the Lord to comfort you and to fill you with abundant gifts. May St Agnes, who, at a young age, resisting flattery and threats, chose as her treasure the precious "pearl" of the Kingdom and loved Christ to the point of martyrdom, intercede for you. May the Virgin Mary obtain that you bear abundant fruits of good deeds, in praise of the Lord and for the good of Holy Church.

To seal these hopes, I impart with affection my Apostolic Blessing to you and to the entire Community of the Capranica, and I willingly extend it to all your loved ones.

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