



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE 11th ORDINARY COUNCIL
OF THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS**

Thursday, 1 June 2006

Dear and Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,

I offer to you all, members of the 11th Ordinary Council of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, a fraternal greeting, which I express in particular to Archbishop Nikola Eterovic, General Secretary, to whom I am also grateful for having interpreted your sentiments.

Your presence reminds me of the Synodal Assembly meeting on the theme "*The Eucharist: Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church*", which was celebrated in Autumn 2005. I now warmly thank you for the work you are doing, sorting and putting in order the proposals that emerged at this last Synodal Assembly.

Today's Meeting is also a favourable opportunity to shed light once again on the importance of charity in the activity of the Church's Pastors.

I have to say that during their *ad limina* visits various Bishops frequently ask me: "But when will the Post-Synodal text be ready?". And I reply: "They are working on it. And they certainly cannot take much longer".

I see gathered here so many competent people that I can only hope that I shall soon see and be able myself to learn from this text, which can then be published for the benefit of the whole Church that is eagerly expecting it.

Est amoris officium pascere dominicum gregem: still today this wonderful intuition of the Bishop Augustine (*In ev. Jo.* 123, 5: *PL* 35, 1967) is a great encouragement to us Bishops, committed to the care of the flock that does not belong to us but to the Lord. In fulfilling his mandate, we seek to

protect his flock, to feed it and to lead it to him, the true Good Shepherd, who wishes the salvation of all.

Feeding the Lord's flock, therefore, is a ministry of vigilant love that demands our total dedication, to the last drop of energy and, if necessary, the sacrifice of our lives.

It is above all the Eucharist which is the source and secret of the ongoing dynamism of our mission. In fact, in his ecclesial life, the Bishop is configured to the image of Christ, who nourishes us with his Flesh and Blood. From the Eucharist the Pastor draws the power to exercise that special pastoral charity which consists in dispensing the food of truth to the Christian people.

And this text which is being drafted will be one such intervention to nourish the People of God with the food of the truth, to help them grow in truth and especially to make known the mystery of the Eucharist and invite them to an intense Eucharistic life.

In particular, if we speak of the truth, the truth about Love cannot be disregarded because it is the very essence of God. Preaching it from the rooftops (cf. Mt 10: 27) is not only *amoris officium*, but a necessary message for human beings in every epoch.

The truth about Gospel love concerns every person and the whole person, and involves the Pastor in proclaiming it without fear or reticence, and never yielding to the conditioning of the world *in season and out of season* (cf. II Tm 4: 2).

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate, in a time such as our own, marked by the growing phenomenon of globalization, it is ever more necessary to make the truth about Christ and his Gospel of salvation reach everyone.

There are countless fields in which to proclaim and witness lovingly to the truth; multitudes are thirsting for it and cannot be allowed to waste away in search of food (cf. Lam 4: 4).

This is our mission, venerable and dear Brothers! May the Spirit of the Lord, whom we are preparing to welcome on the upcoming Solemnity of Pentecost, be poured out upon you through the intercession of Mary, and make you Pastors ever more open to the needs of God's Heart. With these sentiments I bless you all and all those who are entrusted to your pastoral care.

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana