



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO SUPERIORS, RELIGIOUS AND STUDENTS OF THE COMMUNITY
OF THE PIUS PONTIFICAL LATIN AMERICAN COLLEGE
ON THE OCCASION OF ITS 150th ANNIVERSARY***

Clementine Hall

Thursday, 19 February 2009

*Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,
Dear Father Rector,
Superiors, Women Religious and
Students of the Pius Pontifical Latin American College of Rome,*

I appreciate the kind words of Archbishop Carlos José Nájuez of Córdoba, President of the Episcopal Commission for the Pius Pontifical Latin American College, on behalf of you all. I am pleased to receive you when you are celebrating the 150th anniversary of the foundation of this praiseworthy institution.

This College's fruitful role as a valuable formation centre began on 27 November 1858. At the start it was intended for seminarians and, since a little more than three decades ago, it has also catered for deacons and priests. Today, more than 4,000 alumni feel they are members of this great family. They all looked at this *alma mater* with deep affection, since it has been distinguished from the outset by an atmosphere of simplicity, welcome, prayerfulness and fidelity to the Magisterium of the Supreme Pontiff who made a powerful contribution to ensuring that the students increase in love for Christ and in the desire to serve the Church humbly, always seeking the greater glory of God and the good of souls.

Dear students of the Pius Latin American College, you are heirs to this rich human and spiritual patrimony which you must perpetuate and enrich by seriously cultivating the various ecclesiastical disciplines and with the joyful experience of the Church's universality. Here, in this city, the Apostles Peter and Paul boldly proclaimed the Gospel and laid solid foundations on which to

disseminate it throughout the world, fulfilling the Teacher's mandate: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name "of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'. Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And know that I am with you always, until the end of the world" (Mt 28: 19-20).

You yourselves are the fruit of this marvellous sowing of Christ's message of redemption in the course of history. In fact, you come from various countries in which more than 500 years ago several intrepid missionaries made Jesus, our Saviour, known. In this way, through Baptism those people opened themselves to the life of grace that made them God's children by adoption. Furthermore, they received the Holy Spirit which made their cultures fruitful, purifying them and developing the seeds that the Incarnate Word had planted in them, thereby guiding them along the paths of the Gospel (cf. *Address at the opening session of the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops' Conferences*, 13 May 2007, n. 1).

Having gathered at the Chair of the Prince of the Apostles in Rome, you have a privileged opportunity to temper your hearts as true apostles, since all your being and your daily tasks are firmly anchored in the Lord. It is he who must always be the foundation, compass and goal of your efforts. Moreover, the College enables you to share your human and priestly experience in a fraternal way and offers you a favourable opportunity to be permanently open to the knowledge of other cultures and ecclesial expressions. This will help you to be authentic disciples of Jesus Christ and fearless missionaries of his word, with broadmindedness and greatness of soul. In this way you will be better qualified to be men of God who know him in depth, selfless workers in his vineyard and concerned stewards of the charity of Jesus Christ for those in greatest need.

Your Bishops have sent you to the Pius Pontifical Latin American College so that you may be filled with the wisdom of the Crucified Christ, so that returning to your dioceses you may make this treasure available to others in the various offices entrusted to you. This requires you to make the most of your stay in Rome. Beyond enabling you to explore the mysteries of the faith and the truth about man in the light of the Gospel and of the tradition of the Church, perseverance in study and rigorous research will nurture within you a spiritual life rooted in the Word of God and ever nourished by the incomparable richness of the sacraments.

Love for and adhesion to the Apostolic See is one of the most outstanding characteristics of the Latin American and Caribbean peoples. For this reason my meeting with you reminds me of the days I spent at Aparecida when I was moved to witness expressions of collegiality and fraternal communion in the episcopal ministry of the representatives of the Bishops' Conferences of those noble countries. Through my presence there, I sought to encourage the Bishops in their reflection on a fundamental aspect to revitalize the faith of the pilgrim Church in those beloved countries: to bring all our faithful to be "disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ so that our peoples may have life in him".

I ask you to join in this spirit enthusiastically, expressed in the dynamism with which all these dioceses have begun or are beginning the "continental mission" promoted at Aparecida, an initiative that will facilitate the implementation of catechetical and pastoral programmes destined for the formation and development of evangelized and missionary Christian communities.

Accompany these initiatives with your fervent prayers so that the faithful may know and increasingly dedicate themselves to imitating Jesus Christ, taking part frequently in the Sunday celebrations of each community and bearing witness to him in such a way that they become effective instruments of this "New Evangelization" to which my venerable Predecessor, the Servant of God John Paul II frequently convoked them.

At the end of this meeting, I would like to renew my cordial gratitude to all those present, in particular the Episcopal Commission for the College whose mission is to encourage its students and to strengthen their sense of communion and faithfulness to the Roman Pontiff and their Pastors. Likewise I wish to express through the College's Superiors my gratitude to the Society of Jesus, to which my Predecessor St Pius X entrusted the permanent management of this worthy institution, as well as the women religious and personnel who care for these young men with attention and joy. I am also thinking with gratitude of those who fund this work of the Church with their financial help and support it with their generosity and prayers.

I place in the hands of Mary Most Holy, Our Lady of Guadalupe, each and every one of you, as well as your families and your home communities, so that her maternal protection may lovingly assist you in your tasks and help you to be more deeply rooted in her Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the blessed fruit of her womb.

Many thanks.

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