



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE BISHOPS OF ROMANIA
ON THEIR "AD LIMINA" VISIT**

Friday, 12 February 2010

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,

It gives me great joy to meet you during your *ad limina* visit, to listen to you and to reflect together on the journey of the People of God entrusted to you. I greet each one of you with affection and thank in particular Archbishop Ioan Robu for his cordial words on behalf of you all.

I address a special thought to H.B. Lucian Muresan, Major Archbishop of the Greek Catholic Church in Romania. You are Pastors of communities of various rites, who place the riches of your long tradition at the service of communion, for the good of all. In you I greet the Christian communities of Romania and of the Republic of Moldova, so harshly tried in the past, and I pay homage to those Bishops and innumerable priests, men and women religious and faithful who, in the time of persecution showed indomitable loyalty to Christ and to his Church and kept their faith intact.

I would like to express my thanks to you, dear Brothers in the Episcopate, for your generous commitment to serving the rebirth and development of the Catholic community in your countries, and I urge you to continue to be zealous Pastors of Christ's flock, as members of the one Church and with respect for the different ritual traditions. Preserving and passing on the patrimony of the faith is a task for the whole Church, but particularly for Bishops (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 25). The field of your ministry is vast and challenging: indeed, it is a question of proposing a mature and responsible journey of faith to the faithful, especially through religious education, catechesis also of adults and preparation for the sacraments. In this context it is necessary to foster a greater knowledge of Sacred Scripture, of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and of the Magisterial Documents, especially those of the Second Vatican Council and the Papal Encyclicals. It is a demanding programme which requires you to draft joint pastoral plans, aimed at the *bonum animarum* of all Catholics of the different rites and ethnicities. This requires a witness of unity,

sincere dialogue and effective collaboration, without forgetting that unity is primarily the fruit of the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal 5: 22) who guides the Church.

In this Year for Priests I exhort you always to be fathers to your priests, your first, precious collaborators in the Lord's vineyard (cf. Christus Dominus, n. 16, n. 28); with them exists a primarily sacramental bond which makes them share uniquely in the pastoral mission entrusted to Bishops. Strive to tend to the communion between you and your priests in an atmosphere of affection, attention and respectful fraternal dialogue; be concerned with their spiritual and material conditions and with their necessary theological and pastoral development. In your dioceses there is no shortage of religious institutes engaged in pastoral work. May it be your special task to give them due attention and provide them with all the help possible to ensure that their presence is increasingly more important and that consecrated people can carry out their apostolate in accordance with their charisms and in full communion with the local Church.

God does not fail to call men and women to his service. We must be grateful to the Lord for this, intensifying our prayers that he may continue to send workers to his harvest (cf. Mt 9: 37). A primary task of Bishops is the pastoral care of vocations and the human, spiritual and intellectual formation of candidates to the priesthood in seminaries and other formative institutes (cf. Optatam Totius, nn. 2, 4). This formation must guarantee them the possibility of acquiring deep spirituality and rigorous philosophical, theological and pastoral preparation, also through the careful choice of educators and lecturers. Similar attention should be paid to the formation of the members of the Institutes of Consecrated Life, especially for women.

The flourishing of priestly and religious vocations largely depends on the moral and religious health of Christian families. Unfortunately, today there are many pitfalls for the family institution in our secularized and disoriented society. Catholic families in your country which during the time of trial, gave witness of faithfulness to the Gospel sometimes paying dearly for it are not immune to the scourges of abortion, corruption, alcoholism, and drugs, as well as birth control using methods contrary to the dignity of the human person. To combat these challenges, it is necessary to promote parish counsellors who can assure an adequate preparation for conjugal and family life, and who can better organize the pastoral care of youth. More necessary than anything else is a decisive commitment to encouraging the presence of the Christian values in society, developing centres for formation where young people may learn the authentic values, enriched by the genius of your countries' culture, so as to be able to witness to these values in the areas in which they live. The Church wants to make her crucial contribution to building a reconciled and supportive society, able to confront the process of secularization that is under way. The transformation of the industrial and agricultural system, the financial crisis and emigration abroad have not encouraged the preservation of traditional values; these must therefore be proposed anew and reinforced.

In this context it is particularly important to witness to brotherhood between Catholics and Orthodox. This witness must prevail over division and dissent and open hearts to reconciliation.

I am aware of the difficulties that the Catholic communities have to face in this sphere; I hope they will be able to find adequate solutions in that spirit of justice and charity which will animate relations between brothers and sisters in Christ. In May 2009, you commemorated the 10th anniversary of Venerable [Pope John Paul II's historic visit to Romania](#). On that occasion Divine Providence gave the Successor of Peter the chance to make an Apostolic Visit to a nation with an Orthodox majority, where an important Catholic community has been present for centuries. May the desire for unity inspired by that Visit nourish prayer as well as the commitment to dialogue in charity and truth and to the promotion of common initiatives. An area of collaboration between Orthodox and Catholics that is particularly important today concerns the defence of the Christian roots of Europe and of the Christian values as well as the common testimony on issues such as the family, bioethics, human rights, honesty in public life and ecology. A joint commitment to these subjects will make an important contribution to society's moral and civil development. A constructive dialogue between Orthodox and Catholics will not fail to be a leaven of unity and harmony not only for your countries but also for the whole of Europe.

At the end of our Meeting, my thoughts turn to your Communities. Please convey to your priests, men and women religious and to all the faithful of Romania and of the Republic of Moldova, my greetings and encouragement, assuring them of my affection and my prayers. As I invoke the intercession of the Mother of God and of the Saints of your lands, I cordially impart my blessing to you and to all the members of the People of God entrusted to your pastoral care.

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