



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI  
TO PARTICIPANTS IN A COURSE ORGANIZED  
BY THE CONGREGATION FOR EVANGELIZATION OF PEOPLES**

*Hall of the Swiss*

*Saturday, 11 September 2010*

*Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,*

I am glad to welcome you and I greet you with deep affection on the occasion of this course of renewal that the [Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples](#) has organized for you as recently appointed Bishops. For a greater knowledge of the tasks inherent in your ministry and for you to renew the profession of your faith at the tomb of St Peter, these days of reflection in Rome are also a unique experience of collegiality, based on episcopal ordination and hierarchical communion. May this experience of brotherhood, faith, prayer and study at the Apostolic See, increase in each one of you communion with the Successor of Peter and with your Brother Bishops, with whom you share concern for the entire Church. I thank Cardinal Ivan Dias for his cordial words, as well as Monsignor the Secretary and Monsignor the Adjunct-Secretary, who have organized this symposium together with the Dicastery's collaborators.

Dear Brothers, called recently to the episcopal ministry, the Church places great hopes in you and follows you with prayer and affection. I too wish to assure you of my spiritual closeness in your daily service to the Gospel. I know the challenges you must face, especially in Christian communities that practice their faith in far from easy conditions, in which, in addition to various forms of poverty, they are at times the object of persecution, precisely because of their Christian faith. It is up to you to nurture their hope and to share in their difficulties, drawing inspiration from Christ's love that consists of care, tenderness, compassion, acceptance, availability and an interest in peoples' problems, for which we are ready to dedicate our lives (cf. Benedict XVI, [Message for World Mission Day](#), 19 October 2008).

In all your duties you are sustained by the Holy Spirit who, during your Ordination, configured you

to Christ, the Eternal High Priest. In fact the episcopal ministry can only be understood by starting afresh from Christ, the source of the one and supreme Priesthood in which the Bishop is enabled to share. He will therefore "strive to adopt a lifestyle which imitates the *kenosis* of Christ, the poor and humble servant, so that the exercise of his pastoral ministry will be a consistent reflection of Jesus, the Servant of God, and will help him to become, like Jesus, close to everyone, from the greatest to the least" (John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Gregis*, n. 11). However, in order to imitate Christ it is necessary to spend sufficient time "being with him" and contemplating him in the prayerful intimacy of a heart to heart. Being frequently in God's presence, being a man of prayer and adoration: these are the priorities to which a Pastor is called. Through prayer, as the Letter to the Hebrews says (cf. 9: 11-14), the Bishop becomes both victim and altar for the salvation of the world. His life must be a continuous oblation to God for the salvation of his Church and, especially, for the salvation of the souls that are entrusted to him.

This self-sacrificing pastoral gift also constitutes the Bishop's true dignity, which he acquires by making himself the servant of all, even to the point of giving his life. The Episcopate, in fact like the presbyterate should never be misinterpreted in accordance with worldly categories. It is a service of love. The Bishop is called to serve the Church in the style of God made man, becoming ever more fully a servant of the Lord and a servant of humanity. He is above all a servant and steward of the Word of God, which is also his true strength. The primary duty of proclamation, together with the celebration of the sacraments, especially of the Eucharist, derives from the mission he has received, as the Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Gregis* stresses "If the duty of proclaiming the Gospel is incumbent upon the whole Church and each of her children, it is particularly so upon Bishops, who on the day of their sacred Ordination, which places them in Apostolic Succession, assume as one of their principal responsibilities the proclamation of the Gospel; "with the courage imparted by the Spirit, they are to call people to faith and strengthen them in living faith" (n. 26). The Bishop must be nourished abundantly by these words of salvation, listening to it continuously, as St Augustine says: "Even if we are Pastors, the Pastor listens with fear not only to what is addressed to Pastors but also to what is addressed to the flock" (Discourse 47, 2). At the same time, acceptance and the result of the proclamation of the Good News are closely bound to the quality of faith and of prayer. Those who are called to the ministry of preaching must believe in the power of God that flows from the Sacraments and accompanies them in their duties of sanctifying, governing and proclaiming; they must believe and live what they proclaim and celebrate. In this regard, the words of the Servant of God, Paul VI, are timely: "The witness of life has become more than ever an essential condition for real effectiveness in preaching. Precisely because of this we are, to a certain extent, responsible for the progress of the Gospel that we proclaim" (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 76).

I know that the Communities entrusted to you are founded, so to speak, on religious, anthropological and social "frontiers" and, in many cases, are a minority. In such contexts a Bishop's mission is particularly demanding. Yet it is precisely in these circumstances that, through your ministry, the Gospel can show its full saving power. You must not give in to pessimism or

discouragement because it is the Holy Spirit who guides the Church and, with his powerful breath, instils in her the courage to persevere and also to seek out new methods of evangelization in order to reach unexplored territory. The Christian truth is attractive and persuasive precisely because it responds to the profound need of human existence and proclaims convincingly that Christ is the One Saviour of every human being and all human beings. This proclamation is still valid today, as it was in the early days of Christianity when the first great missionary expansion of the Gospel took place.

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate, it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that you possess the wisdom and strength you need to make your Churches witnesses of salvation and peace. He will guide you on the paths of your episcopal ministry, which I entrust to the motherly intercession of Mary Most Holy, Queen of Apostles. For my part, I accompany you with my prayers and with an affectionate Apostolic Blessing, which I impart to each one of you and to all the faithful in your Communities.

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