



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE COMMUNITY
OF THE PONTIFICAL POLISH ECCLESIASTICAL INSTITUTE**

Clementine Hall

Monday, 17 January 2011

*Your Eminences,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Brothers and Sisters*

I welcome you with great joy to the Apostolic Palace and I offer you my most cordial welcome. I greet you, Mons. Rector, and the whole community of the Pontifical Polish Ecclesiastical Institute, as well as your guests. I thank Cardinal Zenon Grocholewski in particular for his meaningful words addressed to me on behalf of everyone present.

What has brought you here, to meet the Successor of Peter and to be strengthened in the faith and in your membership in the Church, is a happy circumstance rightly very dear to you: the centenary of this praiseworthy Institution's foundation. It came into being through the enlightened intuition and admirable initiative of St Józef Sebastian Pelczar, then Bishop of Przemyśl. The Institution began its history during the Pontificate of St Pius X, to whom the project for the foundation was presented.

On 13 May 1909, this same Pope approved the request of the Polish Bishops and on 19 March 1910, with the Decree *Religioso Polonae Gentis*, he established the Polish Hospice. It was solemnly inaugurated on 13 November 1910 by Mons. Sapieha, who later became the Cardinal Archbishop of Krakow. Thus, over the years, the Institute has been able to enjoy the solicitude and affection of various Pontiffs. Among them we recall, closer to us, the Servant of God Paul VI and, of course, the future Blessed, the Venerable Servant of God John Paul II, who visited it in 1980

and emphasized its great significance for the Church and for the Polish people.

The celebration of the first centenary of this important Institution constitutes a valid appeal to remember with gratitude, as is only right, those who founded it with faith, courage and effort; an appeal at the same time to the responsibility for pursuing its original aims in our day, adapting them appropriately to the new situations. The commitment to keep the soul of the Institute alive should be placed above all things, its religious and ecclesial soul, which responds to the providential divine plan to offer Polish priests a suitable environment for study and brotherhood during their period of formation in Rome.

Now, dear Priest students, you too belong to this Pontifical Institute, which has witnessed so many important events for the Church in Poland. Arriving in the heart of Christendom, you have a serious desire to deepen your intellectual and spiritual training in order to carry out for all, in the best possible way, the offices of responsibility that will gradually be entrusted to you by your Bishops for the service of the People of God. May you feel you are “living stones”, an important part of this history, which today also requires your personal and effective response. And may you make your generous contribution, as did Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński during the [Second Vatican Council](#). He was the unforgettable Primate of Poland who had the opportunity to prepare the celebration of the Millennium of the Baptism of Poland and the historic Message of Reconciliation which the Polish Bishops addressed to the German Bishops, containing the famous words: “We forgive and we ask forgiveness”.

The Church needs well-trained priests, rich in the wisdom that is acquired in friendship with the Lord Jesus, and who draw constantly from the Eucharistic Table and the inexhaustible source of his Gospel. May you be able to find in these two irreplaceable sources continuous support and the necessary inspiration for your life and your ministry, for a sincere love of the Truth, which today you are also called to deepen through study and scientific research and which you will be able to share with many in the future.

The search for the Truth, for you who are having this particular Roman experience as priests, is stimulated and enriched by closeness to the Apostolic See on which is incumbent a specific and universal service to Catholic communion in truth and in charity. Remaining bound to Peter in the heart of the Church means recognizing, filled with gratitude, that you are within a rich, centuries-old history of salvation which has reached you through manifold grace and in which you are called to participate actively so that, like a vigorous tree, you will always bear its precious fruit.

May love and devotion to the figure of Peter impel you to serve generously the communion of the entire Catholic Church and of your particular Churches so that, like one large family, all may learn to recognize in Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life, the Face of the merciful Father who does not want any of his children to be lost.

Venerable and dear Brothers, I entrust all of you to the Virgin Mary, so beloved by the Polish people. Always invoke her as the Mother of your priesthood so that she may accompany you on the journey through life and attract to your present and future ministry an abundance of the Holy Spirit's gifts. May Mary help you to persevere with joyful fidelity in grace and in the commitment to follow Jesus and to nourish constantly a fruitful dedication to your daily work and to those whom the Lord sets beside you.

I warmly impart to all of you, and to your relatives and your loved ones, a special Apostolic Blessing. Praised be Jesus Christ.