



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI
TO THE COMMUNITY
OF THE PONTIFICAL ECCLESIASTICAL ACADEMY**

*Hall of Popes
Monday, 11 June 2012*

*Dear Brother Bishop,
Dear Priests,*

First of all, I thank Archbishop Beniamino Stella for the courteous words which he has addressed to me in the name of all present, and for the valued work that he carries out. With great affection I greet the entire community of the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy. I am pleased to receive you once again this year, as the academic year draws to a close and as, for some of you, the day is approaching when you will depart for service in Papal Representations throughout the world. The Pope also counts on you for assistance in fulfilling his universal ministry. I encourage you to be confident and to prepare diligently for the mission which awaits you, trusting in the faithfulness of the One who has known you from the beginning and has called you into communion with his Son, Jesus Christ (cf. *1 Cor 1:9*).

God's faithfulness is the key to, and the source of, our own faithfulness. I would like today to remind you of precisely this virtue, which well expresses the unique bond existing between the Pope and his direct collaborators, both in the Roman Curia and in the Papal Representations: for many, it is a bond grounded in the priestly character that they have received, which is then specified in the particular mission entrusted to each in the service of the Successor of Peter.

In the Bible, faithfulness is above all a divine attribute: God reveals himself as the one who remains ever faithful to his Covenant with his people, despite their unfaithfulness. As the Faithful One, God sees to the fulfilment of his loving plan; thus, he is trustworthy and true. His way of acting makes it possible in turn for men and women to be faithful. In our case, the virtue of

faithfulness is profoundly linked to the supernatural gift of faith; it becomes the expression of that steadfastness proper to those who have made God the foundation of their entire lives. In faith we find the sole guarantee of our standing firm (cf. *Is 7:9b*); only on this foundation can we in turn be truly faithful: first to God, then to his family, the Church our Mother and Teacher, and within the Church to our own vocation, to the history in which the Lord has set us.

Dear friends, with this in mind, I encourage you to cultivate a personal bond with the Vicar of Christ as a part of your spirituality. Certainly, this is something which ought to apply to every Catholic, and even more to every priest. Yet for those who work in the Holy See, it is of particular importance, since they spend much of their energy, their time and their daily ministry in the service of the Successor of Peter. This entails a serious responsibility, but also a special gift which as time goes on should make you grow in closeness to the Pope, a closeness marked by interior trust, a natural *idem sentire*, which is exactly expressed by the word “faithfulness”.

Faithfulness to Peter, who sends you forth, also gives rise to a special faithfulness towards those to whom you are sent. The Representatives of the Roman Pontiff and their collaborators are called upon to interpret his solicitude for all the Churches, as well as the affectionate concern with which he follows the journey of each people. You should therefore cultivate a relationship of profound esteem and benevolence, and indeed true friendship, towards the Churches and the communities to which you will be sent. You are also bound to faithfulness in their regard, a faithfulness concretely manifested each day by your diligence and devotion to your work, by your presence among them at moments of joy, sadness and even tragedy, by your coming to know their culture, their journey as a Church, and by your appreciation of all that God’s grace has accomplished in every people and nation.

This represents a valuable contribution to the Petrine ministry, about which the Servant of God [Paul VI](#) once said: “By entrusting to his Vicar the power of the keys and by making him the rock and foundation of his Church, the Eternal Pastor also gave him the mandate to ‘confirm his brethren’: he does this not only by leading them and keeping them united in his name, but also by supporting and comforting them, certainly by his words, but also in some way by his presence” (Apostolic Letter *Sollicitudo Omnium Ecclesiarum*, 24 June 1969: AAS 61 (1969), 473-474).

Thus you will also encourage and help the particular Churches to grow in faithfulness to the Roman Pontiff and to find in the principle of communion with the universal Church a sure direction for their own pilgrimage through history. Not least, you will also help the Successor of Peter to be faithful to the mission he has received from Christ, enabling him to know better the flock entrusted to his care and to be present to it more effectively by his words, his closeness, his affection. Here I can only mention with gratitude the assistance that I receive every day from my many collaborators in the Roman Curia and in Papal Representations, as well as the support that comes to me from the prayers of countless brothers and sisters worldwide.

Dear friends, to the extent that you are faithful, you will also be worthy of faith. We know too that the faithfulness proper to the Church and to the Holy See is no “blind” loyalty, for it is enlightened by our faith in the One who said: “You are Peter, and on on this rock I will build my Church” (*Mt* 16:18). Let us all be committed to following this path, so that one day we may hear the words of the Gospel parable: “Good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your master” (cf. *Mt* 25:21).

With these sentiments, I renew my affectionate greeting to Archbishop Stella and his collaborators, to the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Child Jesus, and to the entire community of the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy, and I cordially impart my blessing.