



The Holy See

GREETING OF THE HOLY FATHER TO THE COMMUNITY OF THE ALMO COLLEGIO CAPRANICA IN ROME

*Clementine Hall
Monday, 20 January 2025*

[Multimedia]

*Dear seminarians, deacons, priests, and alumni of the Almo Collegio Capranica,
Dear formators,*

I know that tomorrow, 21 January, it will be your feast day in memorial of your Patroness, the virgin and martyr Saint Agnes. I am pleased to meet you on this vigil, in the first days of the Jubilee year and also during the Week of Prayer for Christian unity. I welcome you all.

Six years ago, on 14 January 2019, I approved the new *Statutes* of the *Almo Collegio Capranica*. I confirm their validity and I urge you to follow the guidelines they offer and which permit you to mature the faithful and responsible freedom required of those to whom a ministry in the Church is entrusted.

You are a community of young people and adults, motivated by faith in Jesus Christ and the desire to respond to His call. Your bishops have sent you to Rome to prepare you for ordained ministry or to perfect your formation in its early years. I have learned that you come from thirty-nine different dioceses: twenty-six Italian, fourteen not Italian, including an eparchy of the Syro-Malabar Church. In this variety of provenances and affiliations, something of the one and manifold face of the holy faithful People of God is reflected. And do not forget this: the holy faithful People of God, which is us, the Church. And do not forget what theology says: the holy faithful People of God is “infallible *in credendo*”. Do not forget this.

Centuries ago, one of my predecessors attributed to the *Collegio Capranica* the title of “Almo”.

This may be translated as “which nourishes”, or “which gives life and keeps live”. In this regard, a verse from Dante Alighieri’s *Commedia* comes to mind. It is the one in which the soul of Saint Thomas Aquinas refers to the Order of Preachers as an environment “*u’ ben s’impingua se non si vaneggia*”, “Where well one fattens if he strayeth not” (*Paradiso*, Canto 10, 96) – literally “one fattens” if one does not flounder. This applies not only to a religious order. It is useful to remind many communities, and therefore also that of the *Almo Collegio*, of this verse.

In a context such as yours, one can be “well nourished” if one does not lose one’s way, “straying”: be aware of this. When does one end up straying, or floundering? When fundamental relationships are neglected, the forms of “closeness” I have recalled several times when speaking to seminarians and ordained ministers, the three forms of closeness: closeness to God, closeness to the bishop, and closeness to the people: the three forms of closeness of a priest. There is a fourth: closeness among yourselves. Do not forget these three types of closeness.

Take care of the mission to which Jesus calls the Church today, in complex times but always reached by divine mercy. Live this mission in the style that we appropriately define as “synodal”. I imagine you know the [*Final Document of the 16th Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*](#), where it says that “synodality is a path of spiritual renewal and structural reform that enables the Church to be more participatory and missionary so that it can walk with every man and woman, radiating the light of Christ” (no. 28). I warmly invite you to feel you are part of this journey, and to promote it from now on: in the *Collegio*, in the Pontifical Universities where you study, in the parishes of Rome, in Rebibbia Prison, in Bambino Gesù Hospital, places where you are present for the pastoral experience envisaged for your formative journey. The courage of [*Saint Paul VI*](#) placed synodality as the aim of the Council, opening the synodal path.

For more than a century, the liturgical service in some celebrations in the Papal Basilica of Saint Mary Major has also been entrusted to the *Collegio Capranica*. From time to time, you are also involved in the liturgies we celebrate at Saint Peter’s. I thank you for this and, at the same time, I urge you to take the same care with regard to the “closeness” I referred to earlier as you do with the liturgy. There is no *Christian* liturgy if the gestures we perform do not correspond to a life of faith, hope and charity.

Charity is expressed in a concrete way, not with words, in your *Collegio*, also through a small but precious service of assistance to people in need, who know they can find in you the support to bear the burden of life with less hardship. May this service also help you not to “flounder”, as happens when you lose contact with those in situations of marginality and hardship. When I confess, I ask, when there is an opportunity: “But, do you give alms?” “Yes, I give”. “And when you give alms, do you look at the person’s eyes and touch their hand, or do you just throw the coin and go on without looking?” It is not so much the alms that counts, but that relationship with the poor person, with poor Jesus there. Look at the eyes, touch the hands.

Thank you for coming! I bless you all, alumni, those who support the *Collegio* in many ways, your families, your bishops and your local Churches.

And please, pray for me too, when you turn trustfully to the intercession of Mary *Salus Populi Romani* and the young virgin martyr Agnes. Thank you very much.

Holy See Press Office Bulletin, 20 January 2025

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