



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

TO A GROUP OF HUNGARIAN BISHOPS, PRIESTS AND FAITHFUL *Friday, 6 April 1979* *Revered and*

dear Brothers, I cannot but manifest to you the deep joy I feel today at my first meeting with such a large group of prelates, priests, and faithful, led by Cardinal László Lékai, gathered in Rome for the fourth centenary of the foundation of the Germanic-Hungarian College. This date was already solemnly celebrated on Sunday last in the presence of Cardinals and prelates, high Hungarian Authorities, the Ambassadors of the Federal Republic of Germany and of Austria, and other personalities. The high mission carried out, for centuries, by the Germanic-Hungarian College in forming holy and learned priests, who not infrequently rose to high responsibilities in the Church, was recalled on that occasion. As is known, in 1579 my predecessor Gregory XIII founded the Hungarian College. Shortly before, in the year 1573, he had set up the new Germanic College, associating himself ideally with an intention of St Ignatius of Loyola. Since the Hungarian College could not be endowed with sufficient means, the Pope, in the year following its foundation, that is, in 1580, united it with the Germanic College and gave instructions to the Apostolic Nuncio Malaspina to send twelve students to Rome from Hungary. But the Pontifical Representative was able to send only one, since your nation was under foreign occupation at that time. A great many zealous priests, and also bishops of high prestige, came out of this College: let it suffice to mention the great personalities of Emeric Losy, George Lippay, George Szelepczenyi, who, in the seventeenth century, organized the life of the Church, then afflicted by divisions. I do not want to pass over in silence the figure of Benedict Kisdy, whose admirable hymns still ring out in your churches. But above them all, towers the great thinker, theologian, and orator of last century, Otokar Prolaszka, Bishop of Szekesféhervár. This mission, as regards Hungary, has been interrupted for some time; but there is news that it will resume in the near future. I therefore formulate fervent wishes that the Hungarian priests who are formed in the Germanic-Hungarian College, will be a glory for the Church and for their country. I greet particularly the aforesaid Cardinal Primate, my Confreres in the Episcopate, and all the other former students of the Germanic-Hungarian College, present here or who have remained in Hungary. But in these days you are also celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the opening in Rome of the Hungarian Ecclesiastical Institute, which received the seal of the approval of the Holy See in 1940. I am happy to recall that, also in this Institute, hosts of priests have been educated and formed for the good of the Church and of their country. I have pleasure in greeting the prelates, former pupils or also rectors of the Institute; and with them I intend to greet, with esteem and affection, all the priests who attended the Hungarian Ecclesiastical Institute in Rome. The Church, Mother and Teacher, has the right and the duty to found and direct Institutes, in which she can form and educate her children in full freedom. "Holy Mother Church", the Second Vatican Council affirms, "in order to fulfil the mandate she receives from her divine founder to announce the mystery of salvation to all men and to renew all things in Christ, is under an obligation to promote the welfare of the whole life of man, including his life in this world insofar as it is related to his heavenly vocation; she has therefore a part to play in the development and extension of education" (Decree *Gravissimum Educationis*, Preface). And again: "...The sacred

synod therefore affirms once more the right of the Church freely to establish and conduct schools of all kinds and grades, a right which has already been asserted time and again in many documents of the Magisterium. It emphasizes that the exercise of this right is of the utmost importance for the preservation of liberty of conscience, for the protection of the rights of parents, and for the advancement of culture itself." (*Ibid.*, n. 8). The happy occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of your Institute in Rome, gives you and me the opportunity for a short reflection on the fundamental and primary importance, for the very life of the Church, of the formation of priests who are at the same time *holy*; that is, who live intensely in union with Christ (cf. Jn 15:9 f.), modelling their life on his (Gal 2: 20; Phil 1:21) and carrying out day by day the demands, sometimes hard ones, of the Gospel (cf. Mt 16:24; Mk 8:34); and who are also *learned*, that is, with a deep knowledge of the Word of God, the Sacred Doctrine, the teaching of the Magisterium of the Church, and capable of communicating this teaching to enlighten and guide the faithful, thus proving to be true "Ministers of the Word" (cf. Lk 1:2; Acts 6:4; 20: 24; 2 Cor 6:7; 2 Tim 2:15). I sincerely hope that the directors and teaching staff of the two Institutes mentioned, as well as their students, are striving with all their might towards these aims, carrying out what the Second Vatican Council earnestly recommends, when it speaks of Major Seminaries and, therefore, also of Ecclesiastical Institutes: "In them the whole training of the students should have as its object to make them true shepherds of souls after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, teacher, priest, and shepherd. Hence, they should be trained for the ministry of the Word, so that they may gain an ever increasing understanding of the revealed word of God, making it their own by meditation, and giving it expression in their speech and in their lives. They should be trained for the ministry of worship and sanctification, so that by prayer and the celebration of the sacred liturgical functions they may carry on the work of salvation through the eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments. They should be trained to undertake the ministry of the shepherd, that they may know how to represent Christ to men" (cf. Decree *Optatam Totius*, n. 4.)². Faced with this qualified group of prelates, priests, and faithful of noble Hungary, there come, spontaneously, remembrance, admiration, and veneration of St Stephen—the King who, between the tenth and the eleventh century, obtaining recognition of the kingdom from my predecessor Sylvester the Second, started your glorious history and became, rightly, the father of the country, the apostle of the Catholic faith, and the founder of the Church in Hungary. Always be proud of this great Saint, who was able to unite, in perfect harmony, consistency with the Christian faith, faithfulness to the Church, and love of his own nation! I manifested my sentiments of good will and affection for you in my letter addressed on 2 December last to the Cardinal Primate, the prelates and, thereby, also to all my dear brothers and sons in Hungary. In this letter I wrote that I was convinced that the Catholic Church, which has had such an important part in Hungarian history, will be able, also in the future, to continue, in a certain sense, to mould the spiritual face of your country; irradiating on her sons and daughters that light of the Gospel of Christ, which has illuminated the lives of your fellow citizens for so many centuries. At this meeting of ours, I wish to renew to you the expression of my sentiments, and urge you to continue to work, with zeal and dedication, always in harmony with one another. I have learned with deep satisfaction that you are dedicating yourselves, with special and increased commitment, to *the formation of youth*. This is a primary duty of the Church, which is aware that "young people exert a very important influence in modern society" (Decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, n. 12). They seek truth, solidarity and justice; they dream and wish to contribute to the construction of a better society, in which selfishness will be banned, but the originality and uniqueness of human persons respected; they seek a global and exhaustive answer to man's fundamental problems, such as those concerning the essential and existential meaning of life. Answer these demands, these questions of the young, with constant zeal, presenting to them Christ, his person, his life, his message: a demanding one, it is true, but charged with hope and love. "Our spirit is set in one direction", I wrote recently, "the only direction for our intellect, will and heart is—towards Christ our Redeemer, towards Christ, the Redeemer of man. We wish to look towards him—because there is salvation in no one else but him, the Son of

God—repeating what Peter said: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (Jn 6:68; cf. Acts 4:8-12) (*Redemptor Hominis, II, 7*). Continue with these efforts of yours. The Lord will help you in every circumstance with his comfort and with his grace.³ Concluding this meeting, I address an affectionate greeting to you present here, to your priests and faithful, and to all the other prelates, priests, and faithful of Hungary; the Kingdom of Mary. Always be firm in faith in God and in Christ (cf. I Cor 16:13; Col 1:23; 2:7; Heb 4:14; 1 Pt 5:9) and hand down clearly to future generations this incomparable gift of the Lord (cf. Rom 6:17; 1 Cor 11:23; 15:3; 2 Tim 2:2)! I invoke on your nation the motherly protection of the Blessed Virgin, its heavenly Queen; of Holy King Stephen; of St Elizabeth of Hungary, "pauperum consolatrix" and "famelicorum reparatrix"; of Blessed Hedwig, Queen of Poland, the splendid gift that your people bestowed on my country of origin in the fourteenth century; of all the Saints, men and women, that Hungary has given, for the glory of God, to the Church and to the world. My respectful greeting and good wishes are also addressed to the Civil Authorities, as to all Hungarians who do not share your faith. To all of you, prelates, priests, men and women religious, and the faithful of Hungary, I impart an abundant Apostolic Blessing. © Copyright 1979 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana