



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS  
POPE JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE COMMUNITY OF THE  
PONTIFICAL NORTH AMERICAN COLLEGE IN ROME**

*13 March 1997*

*Your Eminences,  
Your Excellencies,  
Dear Priests and Seminarians,*

I am pleased to welcome the *Episcopal Board of Governors, and the Rector, staff, seminarians and student priests of the Pontifical North American College*. From its foundation by Pope Pius IX, your College has always maintained close spiritual bonds with the Successors of Peter, and this has been an important factor in strengthening the catholic and universal character of the Church in your country. Now, on the eve of the Third Christian Millennium, the College is called to send forth new generations of priests imbued with deep love of our Lord Jesus Christ, zeal for the spread of the Gospel and a vivid sense of the Church's living tradition.

This year marks the hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the entrustment of the United States to the patronage of the Immaculate Conception, to whom the College too is dedicated. I pray that the Board of Governors, who are here to assess the work of the College in the light of the Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* and of the *Program of Priestly Formation* recently approved by the Bishops' Conference, will uphold and further promote the great formative legacy of the College.

But above all it depends on the Faculty and students to give life to the program of priestly training. Seventeen years ago I had the joy of visiting your College and celebrating the Eucharist in the College Chapel, dedicated to Mary under the title of the Immaculate Conception. I renew to you the appeal which I made then: that, like Mary, you will ponder God's word in your hearts each day,

so that your whole life may be a proclamation of Christ, the Word made flesh (cf. *Homily*, 22 February 1980). In this way you will be the priests and apostles which the Church in the United States needs at the threshold of the new Millennium.

To the whole College community I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of joy and peace in the Lord.

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