



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO TREVISO SEMINARIANS**

Tuesday, 15 September 1998

Venerable Brother,

Dear Priests and Seminarians,

1. I am very pleased to meet you, who form the communities of the major and minor seminaries of the Diocese of Treviso. I cordially greet Bishop Paolo Magnani and thank him for his kind words which vibrantly expressed the deep bond of faith and affection that the Church of Treviso cherishes for the Successor of Peter.

Dear seminarians, I am delighted to welcome both you and your teachers, and I thank you for this visit which brings back pleasant memories of the days I spent at the house that for several years your Diocese has made available to me in Lorenzago di Cadore. I am thinking in particular of the meeting I had there last July with a large representation from your diocesan community. You constitute a most important group in the local Church, because of your values and the hopes you are able to nurture: in a certain sense, you represent the future of the Diocese.

Dear boys, who are beginning to open your minds and hearts to life's great questions, and to you, young men who are already facing those questions in the light of scientific, philosophical and theological research, I hope that your human and spiritual growth will proceed smoothly and fruitfully.

2. The Church, which has given you a new birth in faith and guides you on your vocational journey, looks with confidence at your educational experience and offers you the best ways for this journey to achieve its goal. She knows these ways not only from a human educational wisdom, a wisdom which she does not refuse to question, but especially from that "fullness of grace and truth" (cf. Jn 1:14; 17) which she contemplates everyday in the mystery of Christ.

Jesus is the way (cf. Jn 14:6). With him and through him we can reach the full truth about God and ourselves, about the world and history, about good and evil; through him we can obtain life and freedom.

May Jesus then be the constant guidepost on your daily journey. May your educational experience have this first and foremost goal: to learn how “to be with Jesus” (cf. *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 42).

3. Of course, it is not simply a matter of being physically in a place or of a merely theoretical and intellectual knowledge of a person: even Judas “was” with Jesus, but he did not share his love or his plan; he did not let himself be taught and transformed by Christ.

To be able “to be with him”, we must be willing to let the threefold dynamism of *vocation*, *conversion* and *communion* become a reality within us.

Vocation means thinking of one's whole life as a response. At every moment the Lord, through his Word, communicated through in one's studies, the Superiors' directives and concrete circumstances themselves, calls each individual to perfection and holiness (cf. *ibid.*, n. 20), and awaits a generous response.

Conversion means being gradually conformed to Jesus Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit (cf. *ibid.*, n. 21), seeking to remove from this path, rather this “race” towards him, “every weight, and sin which clings so closely” (Heb 12:1).

Communion means living in Christ and letting Christ live in me, as the Apostle Paul expressed it so powerfully (cf. Rom 6:10; Gal 2:20), to become, like him and in him, effective instruments in the loving plan of the Blessed Trinity, who through the Church wants to make one family of all people (cf. *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 12).

4. In its fundamental demands, this is the way of every Christian and of the entire ecclesial community. It is expressed, within the great organism of the Church enlivened by the Spirit, in the many concrete forms of “call and response”, among which the *orientation to the ordained ministry and the priesthood* stands out.

On this path, *each of your personalities*, with its needs and its potential, will find its most authentic growth: the quest for human maturity (cf. *ibid.*, n. 43) and affective vitality (cf. *ibid.*, n. 44), intellectual dynamism (cf. *ibid.*, nn. 51-56) and the yearning to be committed to building a more human and more Christian world (cf. *ibid.*, nn. 57-59).

Today, you are going through a particularly significant phase of your life: *the period of vocational discernment and formation oriented to the priestly life*. It is a period in which you have the grace and the opportunity to share with your contemporaries the same journey in search of the same ideals. A period in which, almost physically, you experience that “apostolic community gathered about Jesus, listening to his word, proceeding towards the Easter experience, awaiting the gift of the Spirit for the mission” (*ibid.*, n. 60). Be worthy of this extraordinary moment of grace! Welcome with constant attention the educational opportunity that is offered to you each day, reproducing in yourselves the “icon” of the young Jesus who, in loving dialogue with the Father and in docility to Mary and Joseph, his human teachers, “increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man” (Lk 2:52).

5. On today's liturgical memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows, I would like to entrust each of you to her motherly care. May she help you to follow Jesus with generous availability, to “be with him” always, even and above all at the hour of the Cross, because it is precisely in the total gift of self that one experiences God's love and receives the light and strength of

the Holy Spirit.

With these sentiments, dear friends, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to you, which I gladly extend to your relatives and to all who guide you on your vocational journey.

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