



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE COMMUNITY OF THE PONTIFICAL
PORTUGUESE COLLEGE IN ROME**

Saturday, 11 January 2003

*Dear Cardinal Patriarch,
Dear Priests of the Pontifical Portuguese College,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

With great joy I welcome you to the house of Peter, recalling the visit I paid you 18 years ago. I greet you one by one, including in my greeting your families and your countries of origin that I keep in my heart.

Through the Cardinal who kindly presented the College family and who represents the Portuguese Bishops as President of the Bishops' Conference, I would like to congratulate the Bishops on the challenge they have accepted and on the confidence and concern for the College they have shown in the 100 years of its existence. I take the occasion to thank those responsible for the operation of the house and for the formation, for their diligence and competence. I thank the students for their serious application and enthusiasm in responding to the expectations of their respective dioceses.

For my part, I willingly join in your praise to God for the hundred years of this institute and I renew the hope placed in it by my Predecessors, starting with Pope Leo XIII. With his Brief *Rei Catholicae apud Lusitanos* of 20 October 1900, he established the Pontifical Portuguese College, endowing it with a residence and a stable administration, so as to "offer", as we read in the document, "to those who are dedicated in the priesthood a broader formation so that, thanks to this unique asset, they can provide the (Portuguese) Church with all the assistance that she needs".

In a local Church it is very useful for some of the clergy to deepen their knowledge of the Christian message with university studies. I am conscious of the remarkable zeal with which the Portuguese Bishops have sought to offer their priests the resources for a superior formation, particularly, by establishing and constantly expanding the Catholic University of Portugal. However, it is in line with university institutions to ensure that some of the students study at academic centres abroad to acquire a broader vision and complementary formation. Hence the great value the Portuguese College has had and will continue to have in providing suitable facilities for priests who receive the grace to continue their theological and pastoral formation and benefit from all the means that the Eternal City can offer them.

One reason for praise is that in the course of its 100 years, 867 students have passed through the College, many priests who were enlightened and zealous pastors - including three cardinals and 64 bishops - to whose formation this Institute made a superb contribution. Rome helped confirm in them a universal, Catholic mentality, in accord with the direction of the activity carried out when, imbued by an authentic apostolic spirit, they put at the service of evangelization the first hand knowledge contact of persons and situations experienced during their time in Rome. One lesson this centenary teaches us is the great spiritual fruitfulness that derives from the location of this Portuguese Institute in the very heart of the Catholic world that offers exceptional opportunities for academic work and for personal experience.

The College, whose various aspects recall the Upper Room of Jerusalem, has entered the second century of its existence. On the members of its community, I implore the coming of the Holy Spirit with His gifts. As the Cardinal has said, today it offers hospitality to many priests of different countries and languages. This makes it a privileged place for priests to come together, and it creates a bond that fosters unity among the various local Churches. At the end of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, I invited all the people of God to "make the Church the home and school of communion: that is the great challenge facing us in the millennium which is now beginning, if we wish to be faithful to God's plan and respond to the world's deepest yearnings" (Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte*, n. 43). In memory of our meeting, I entrust a hope to you: that you will know how to make your own contribution to deepening and consolidating the unity of the Church; Rome is the sign and centre of unity and God has placed it at the service of unity!

As you know, a Christian community lives from the effort of communication and cooperation of each of its members, who receives the love that flows from the Holy Trinity, whose Persons subsist in a ceaseless, reciprocal communication and exchange of being and life. This Trinitarian communion is the model that must appear in the life and service of the priest; it has a "radical 'communitarian form' and can only be carried out as a 'collective work' " (Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 17), in hierarchical communion with his own Bishop and with other priests and lay faithful.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters,

These are a few of the sentiments that the centenary of your and our College inspires in me. Move forward unceasingly in the Christian, priestly, apostolic and cultural formation that the Church expects of you. Love the Gospel deeply and love the men and women to whom you are sent, after the example and measure of the Heart of Christ (cf. Jer 3,15). The College is solemnly consecrated to him with an act of entrustment that is renewed by the successive generations of Superiors and students who find in him serenity, inspiration and holiness.

This institute must continue to be, as it was in the past, a breeding ground of apostles, a meeting point of Catholic Rome with your countries and a living witness to their dedication and fidelity to the See of Peter. With these hopes for a blessed future of the Portuguese College, I warmly impart my Apostolic Blessing to the Superiors and students, to the benefactors and collaborators, present and absent.