



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE PONTIFICAL ECCLESIASTICAL ACADEMY*

Thursday, 15 May 2003

Archbishop President,

Dear Priests, Students of the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy,

1. I am grateful to you for this visit and greet you all with affection. I first greet your President, Archbishop Justo Mullor García, and I thank him for his words on behalf of those present as well as for the diligence and generosity which he dedicates daily to his demanding duty. I extend my sentiments of gratitude to those who, in various ways and capacities, help him in the formation programme.

I greet in a special way you, dear students. Some of you will shortly be completing the academic *curriculum* and are preparing to enter the Apostolic See's service directly. I express fervent good wishes to them for a fruitful ministry and ask the Lord to guide them at every moment of their lives.

2. Dear students, on other occasions too I have been able to stress the importance of your special "mission", which will take you far from your families while at the same time offering you the opportunity to come into contact with many different ecclesial and social situations.

To perform faithfully the duties that will be entrusted to you, it is indispensable that during your years of formation you seek to make holiness your prime objective. I also recalled this when I visited your Academy two years ago on the occasion of its third centenary. Make it your daily task to aspire to Gospel perfection by nourishing a continuous loving relationship with God in prayer, by listening to his word, and especially in devout participation in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. This is the secret, dear friends, of the effectiveness of every ministry and service in the Church.

3. You come from different countries, cultures and backgrounds. Community life in the Academy here in Rome, the heart of Catholicism, teaches you sharing and reciprocal understanding, opens you to the universal dimension of the Church and gives you an opportunity to understand better the complex human realities of our time. All this will be a great help

when you work among peoples with different customs, civilizations, languages and religious traditions. Your service will be all the more rewarding the harder you strive, with a genuinely priestly spirit, to encourage the growth of the local Churches, linking them with the Chair of Peter, and for the good of the peoples.

May the Virgin Mary, whom we are venerating in particular during this year dedicated to the Rosary, rest her gaze on each of you and accompany your every step with her motherly protection.

I assure you of my prayers and warmly bless you all.

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