



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI TO THE PRIESTS OF THE PONTIFICAL ECCLESIASTICAL ACADEMY

Friday, 20 May 2005

Dear friends of the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy,

It is with particular joy that I welcome you, a month after my election as Successor of Peter. Some may remember another moment that we spent together on the occasion of my Visit to your Academy some years ago. I cordially greet you all and, in the first place, I greet your President [Archbishop Mullor García Justo], whom I thank for his kind words to me.

I especially would like to thank you for the generosity with which you have answered the request made of you, making yourself available to offer a special service to the Church and to her supreme Pastor by working as a Pontifical Representative. It is a unique mission that demands, as does every form of priestly ministry, the faithful following of Christ. He who carries out [this service] with love is promised a hundredfold and eternal life (cf. Mt 19: 29).

In your daily activity you must apply yourselves to guarantee that the bonds of communion between the particular Churches and the Apostolic See are evermore intense and active. At the same time, you must be concerned that the solicitude which the Successor of Peter has for all members of the Lord's flock, especially for the defenceless, the weak and the abandoned, is made present and visible.

And so, it is important that in these years of formation in Rome you strengthen your *sensus Ecclesiae*, assuming an ecclesial manner in your entire personality, in mind and heart. May you be concerned with cultivating in yourselves the two fundamental and complementary dimensions of the Church: communion and mission, unity and evangelizing tension.

In the movement toward the centre and heart of the Church, there must be a correspondingly

courageous "thrust" that pushes you to witness to the particular Churches that treasure of truth and grace which Christ entrusted to Peter and to his Successors. These dimensions of your mission are well represented in the two Apostles, Peter and Paul, who shed their blood in Rome.

While you are at the Academy, strive, therefore, to become fully "Roman" in the ecclesial sense: secure and faithful in acceptance of the Magisterium and of the pastoral guidance of the Successor of Peter, and at the same time cultivating the missionary longing typical of St Paul, who was so anxious to cooperate in the spreading of the Gospel to the extreme ends of the earth.

We were all struck by the fact that the witness of Pope John Paul II awakened a profound "echo" in non-Christians too, as was mentioned by various Apostolic Nuncios in their reports. This confirms that when Christ is proclaimed by a consistent life, it speaks to the heart of all, even the brothers and sisters of other religious traditions.

As I said a few days ago to the Roman clergy, the mission of the Church is not in conflict with respect for other religious and cultural traditions. Christ takes nothing away from man; rather, he gives fullness of life, joy, hope. Of this hope, you are also called to "give reason" (cf. I Pt 3: 15), in the different settings where Providence will destine you.

To carry out adequately the service that awaits you and that the Church entrusts to you, a solid cultural preparation is necessary, which includes the knowledge of languages, of history and of law, with wise openness to different cultures. It then becomes necessary that, at an even deeper level, you propose holiness and the salvation of the souls that you meet on your journey as the fundamental aim of your existence.

To this end, try tirelessly to be exemplary priests, enlivened by constant and intense prayer, cultivating intimacy with Christ. Be priests according to the Heart of Christ and carry out your ministry with success and apostolic fruit. Never allow yourselves to be tempted by the logic of career and of power.

In closing, I address a special greeting to all who will soon be leaving the Academy for their first duty as a Pontifical Representative and, as I assure each of them of a special remembrance in prayer, I wish for them a fruitful apostolic mission. Upon the entire community of the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy I invoke the constant protection of Mary Most Holy and of the Apostles Peter and Paul; to all of you and to your loved ones I affectionately impart my Apostolic Blessing.

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