



The Holy See

OPENING OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR OF ECCLESIASTICAL UNIVERSITIES

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Friday 22 October 2004

1. I am also pleased this year to greet in the Vatican Basilica the vast and varied *communities of Roman Ecclesiastical Universities* that are returning to their academic life. I greet with gratitude Cardinal Zenon Grocholewski, who is celebrating the Holy Eucharist; I greet the other Prelates here, the Officials of the Congregation for Catholic Education, the Rectors, lecturers and students of the Athenaeums and of the other Institutes and Pontifical Faculties. I offer my most cordial welcome to each and all of them.

2. "*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call*" (Eph 4: 4). These words that St Paul addressed to the Ephesians are addressed this evening to the ecclesiastical academic community of Rome, the number and variety of whose members make it unique in the world. Indeed, the Roman Ecclesiastical Universities contribute in their own way to expressing the unity and universality of the Church. It is a multiform unity that is based on the same "calling", that is, on the common vocation to the *following of Christ*. I especially ask you, dear students, to make sure that your training in these years helps you to "*lead a life*" that is ever *more worthy of the Christian vocation* (cf. Eph 4: 1); I urge you to be ready to place your talents at the service of the Church in all humility.

3. The Responsorial Psalm (Ps 24[23]) has just evoked a "*generation*" of those who "*seek the face of God*" (v. 6). I am thinking of you, dear lecturers and students, who have in common your desire to know God and to penetrate his mystery of salvation, fully revealed in Christ. To ascend the mountain of the Lord, the Psalmist cautions that "*clean hands and a pure heart*" are required (Ps 24[23]: 4). And he adds that those who want to know the truth must work hard to practise it in what they say and do (cf. *ibid.*). "Such is the generation of those who seek... God": be like them, dear friends! Be men and women committed to *creating unity between faith and life* at the cognitive level but above all at the existential level.

4. In the *Eucharist* we find a key to a rapid interpretation of what the Word of God is telling us in today's liturgy. On the one hand, the Eucharist is the *principle of unity in charity*, of communion in the multiplicity of gifts. On the other, it is the *mysterium fidei* that in itself contains the invitation to move on *from the superficial to the profound reality* that lies beneath appearances. Through the Eucharist, the Holy Spirit illuminates the eyes of our heart, enabling us to understand the signs of the new times (*Gospel Acclamation*; cf. Eph 1: 17; Lk 21: 29-31). The Eucharistic mystery is *the school at which Christians train in the "intellectus fidei"* (knowledge of the faith), by learning to know through adoration and to believe through contemplation. In doing this, at the same time they develop their true *Christian personality*, to be able to *witness in charity to the truth*.

5. Dear brothers and sisters, this academic year coincides with the *Year of the Eucharist*. Following the example of St Thomas Aquinas and all of the Doctors of the Church, strive to draw from the

Sacrament of the Altar the renewed enlightenment of wisdom and the constant strength of evangelical life. May Mary, "Woman of the Eucharist" and Virgin of obedient listening, accompany you and guide you every day to the Eucharist, the perennial fount of salvation. © Copyright 2004 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

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