



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO A GROUP OF FOCOLARE SEMINARIANS**

Wednesday, 30 December 1998

Dear Seminarians!

1. I am very pleased to meet you on the occasion of your annual congress organized by the Focolare Movement. I greet Chiara. I also greet you with great affection and congratulate the organizers of this beautiful programme which is meant to offer young people who have started out on their journey to the priesthood in various parts of the world the chance to know each other, meet each other, exchange experiences and together look at the many unprecedented challenges of the modern world.

The joyful, festive atmosphere of the Christmas holidays further encourages the creation of warmer, more fraternal relations among you: you feel part of a family that is celebrating the birth of the Redeemer, as you meditate on his message of love which must be proclaimed and witnessed to before all men and women. It is precisely for this reason that your objective is to focus on Jesus, our only Saviour.

2. As the theme chosen for the congress, "Jesus crucified and abandoned: a bridge between heaven and earth", reminds us, you intend to pause and contemplate the person and saving mission of Christ. In fact, he is at the centre of every vocational path, and this is especially true for those who are preparing for the ministerial priesthood. Is it not the personal attraction of Christ, the intensity of his words and the compelling force of his prophetic deeds that today still draw so many young people to follow the path of the evangelical life and of humble and generous service to the kingdom of God and the good of others?

Dear friends, deepen your knowledge of Christ through prayer and the help of your teachers. In the supreme moment of death, Jesus crucified and abandoned reveals himself as the true bridge that unites heaven and earth: through his total sacrifice of love, he shows to all people the merciful face of his heavenly Father. A priest is called, like Jesus, to be a minister of God's mercy, to make living and active the saving mediation of the One who is the supreme bridge joining

God to mankind.

May Mary, the Mother of Unity, who at the foot of the cross welcomed the Beloved Disciple entrusted to her by Jesus, help you more and more to resemble the image of her divine Son. To her I entrust all your desires, plans and commitments. May she accompany you and protect you by her maternal intercession and make your journey ever richer in spiritual fruit. May you also be supported by the Blessing that I affectionately impart to you present here, to your families and to your formation communities.

Seminarians and Focolarini, a good combination. In Castel Gandolfo it is even better. We are in the Christmas season. Today is 30 December; tomorrow is the last day of the year. I wish you a happy new year, Brazilians, Poles, Spaniards, Italians and others still. You are multinational. Praised be Jesus Christ.

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