



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE COMMUNITY OF REDEMPTORIS MATER,
THE DIOCESAN SEMINARY OF ROME**

Thursday, 18 March 2004

"Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature" (Mk 16: 15).

1. Dear Superiors and students of *Redemptoris Mater* Diocesan Seminary, I am delighted to welcome you with these words of the risen Jesus which you hear and meditate upon on the Feast of Sts Cyril and Methodius, the anniversary of the canonical establishment of your Seminary.

I greet, first of all, the Cardinal Vicar and thank him for his words. I greet with affection your Rector, Mons. Claudiano Strazzari, the other superiors and formation teachers and each one of you, dear students.

2. More than 16 years have passed since your Seminary opened its doors. It has been a new and very significant experience in view of its formation of priests for the new evangelization. Since then, various other *Redemptoris Mater* Seminaries have sprung up in the world that are inspired by your model and share your purposes.

In the course of these years, your Seminary has produced particularly abundant good results. For these I give thanks with you to the Lord. I would also like to thank for these same results the Neocatechumenal Way, in which your vocations are born and develop. I also thank the Rector and your other superiors who, under the caring guidance of the Cardinal Vicar, preside with love and wisdom over your preparation for the priesthood.

My grateful thoughts also go to the Founders of the Way, to whom we are indebted for their felicitous insight in proposing the creation of your Seminary and who work so hard to encourage the birth of vocations to the priesthood and to the consecrated life in the Way itself. I would then

like to recall with you two Bishops, Bishop Giulio Salimei and Bishop Maximino Romero who, with their enlightened dedication and the example of their lives, have both made a great contribution - the former as Rector, the latter as Spiritual Director - to initially developing and successfully shaping *Redemptoris Mater*.

I am also pleased to stress, as the Cardinal Vicar has already recalled, that in the past 16 years, your Seminary has produced a large number of zealous priests, fittingly dedicated partly to pastoral service in the Diocese of Rome and partly to the mission in every region of the world as *fidei donum* priests.

3. To achieve these positive results you must always have a clear idea throughout your formation of the nature and features of the ministerial priesthood, as they were described by the Second Vatican Council and later by the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*.

The common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood are in fact ordered and closely related to one another, since each in its own way participates in the one priesthood of Christ.

However, they are different in essence and not only in rank (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 10). Indeed, by virtue of the sacrament of Orders, priests are configured in a special way to Jesus Christ as Head and Shepherd of his people, and they must devote the whole of their lives, like Christ, to serving this people. Precisely because they sacramentally represent Jesus Christ, Head and Shepherd, they are called to preside over the communities entrusted to their care in close communion with their Bishop, and in accordance with each of the three dimensions - prophetic, priestly and royal - in which the one mission of Christ and of his Church is expressed (cf. *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, nn. 12-16).

Dear seminarians, by adhering to this solid doctrine in your formation and, subsequently, in the daily exercise of the priestly ministry, you will be able to live the grace of the priesthood joyfully and to assure an authentic and fruitful service to the Diocese of Rome and the sister Churches to which you may be sent.

Prayer, study and community life, well harmonized in the formation programme and put into practice with fidelity and generosity in the concrete life of your Seminary, are the ways in which the Lord sculpts in you, day after day, the image of Christ, the Good Shepherd.

4. When you are priests, you can also prepare yourselves confidently and fruitfully on these foundations to live without reserve your constitutive membership in the diocesan priesthood, for which the Bishop is both the essential reference point and the deep bond that binds you to the experience of the Neocatechumenal Way. Indeed, as art. 18 of the Statutes of the Way states, in the diocesan and missionary *Redemptoris Mater* Seminaries, "candidates to the priesthood find in

participation in the Neocatechumenal Way a specific, basic element of the formation process and, at the same time, they train to make the genuine presbyteral choice of service to the entire people of God, in the fraternal communion of the priesthood".

Likewise, it is necessary to avoid a false choice between pastoral service in the Diocese to which you belong and the universal mission to the ends of the earth which is rooted in sacramental participation in the priesthood of Christ (cf. *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, nn. 17-18), for which you are specially prepared through the experience of the Neocatechumenal Way.

In fact, the decision as to where you are eventually sent is up to the Bishop, who has at heart both the needs of his Diocese and the requirements of the universal mission. By entrusting yourselves to his decisions with confident and affable obedience, you will find your inner peace and serenity and will be able to express in every case your missionary charism, given that also here in Rome, pastoral care is and must be more and more marked by the priority of evangelization.

5. Dear Superiors and students of Rome's *Redemptoris Mater* Seminary, always look at your life, your vocation and your mission with the eyes of faith. At the end of this meeting, I would like once again to express the affection and confidence I feel for you and to assure you of my constant prayers for each one of you, for the whole Seminary, for the communities of the Neocatechumenal Way and especially for the vocations to the priesthood that develop in them.

With these sentiments I impart to all of you and to those who are dear to you the Apostolic Blessing.