



The Holy See

GREETING OF THE HOLY FATHER TO THE COMMUNITY OF THE ARGENTINE PRIESTS' COLLEGE IN ROME

Thursday, 16 January 2025

[Multimedia]

*Dear priests, formators,
Ladies and gentlemen:*

Today it should be me who accompanies you, at the celebration of Holy Mass and at supper. I don't need to tell you that I am looking forward to the barbecue. But being a pastor, as you well know, puts us sometimes in front and sometimes behind, according to the designs of the One who is Lord of our lives.

In any case, so as not to leave aside the aromas of our land, I would like to tell you about something I read recently about the priest Brochero and which I think is very appropriate for you, who are still preparing to face the arduous battle of the Gospel. What I am going to tell you about him refers to his priestly soul and the first, essential point is the statement made by his friends that "Brochero could be none other than a priest".

We must firmly assume this priestly identity, realize that our vocation is not an addendum, a means to other ends, even pious ones, such as salvation. Absolutely not. Vocation is God's plan for our life, what God sees in us, what stirs His gaze of love; I would dare to say that in a certain way it is the love that He has for us and herein lies our true essence.

And here the priest saint explains what it means to embrace "the ecclesiastical career" - you know it is an expression that I do not like, but as Brochero understands it, in his desire to die running like a "chesche" horse, it is more similar to that of Saint Paul (cf. 2 *Tim* 4:7). It is, he tells us, "to work for the good of one's neighbour until the last [moment] of one's life", the total gift of oneself, the

giving of oneself to God in one's brother, spending and wearing oneself out for the sake of the Gospel. At the same time, the saint continues, it is "to fight the enemies of the soul, like pumas who fight lying down when they cannot defend themselves standing up". That is to say, to nurture of the interior life, to keep the fire burning, with great humility, "lying down", because "standing" in our pride we are more vulnerable.

Another important note is the priestly fraternity. First of all, with the Bishop, of whom he considers himself a simple soldier, in order to emulate the feats of the heroes, fighting alongside him, side by side, to the last cartridge. And with his brother priests, he wants to share everything he has, he invites them to correct him with confidence and he does so for them with frankness, asking them to lead a life of deep piety, with frequent confession "either with one or the other", so as to share their whole life, materially, spiritually and apostolically.

Finally, of course, the Eucharist. As arduous as his task was, he tried never to abandon it, even spending most of the night out in the open, in the middle of the cornfields, waiting for them to wake up at the farm - since he did not consider it appropriate to disturb them in the early hours of the morning - so that he could go in to celebrate. That sacrificial respect for the mystery that, far from impositions, was more powerful than a thousand words of cloying eloquence.

May Jesus bless you and the Holy Virgin watch over you. And, before the Lord at the altar, don't forget to pray for me.

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