



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PUPILS OF THE
PONTIFICAL ECCLESIASTICAL ACADEMY OF ROME***

17 March 1979

Dear Brothers!

I wish to express my satisfaction with you, dear Pupils of the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy, gathered here

—led by your President, Mons. Cesare Zacchi—to manifest to the Vicar of Christ sentiments of devotion and your priestly promise of faithfulness.

I thank you for the generous gift of your youth to the Church and to her visible Head, and I am happy to talk to you, dear priests, like a father among his sons, in an atmosphere of cordiality and simplicity to you who have begun or have completed the courses of preparation for service of the Holy See in the Pontifical Representations. It is natural that the Pope should love to express to you his expectations and hopes, and want to encourage you vigorously to undertake, in a spirit of faith and trusting abandonment in the Lord, the apostolic labours that are waiting for you.

Yours, in fact, will be an eminently pastoral service, a direct "diakonia" for the good of the local Churches, with a view to making their union with the Apostolic See more and more operative. The Pontifical Representative and his Collaborators must be, in the different countries, the visible testimony, as it were, of the presence of him who has been chosen, in Peter's succession, to be the foundation of unity and the centre of cohesion of the whole Church, and has received the charism of strengthening his brothers (Lk 22:32).

Therefore, in the accomplishment of your work, which is not without sacrifices, nearly always hidden, and sometimes not sufficiently appreciated, keep in mind that you are "servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor 4:1) in the specific and delicate task of giving a

perceptible voice, in the different parts of the world, to him whom Jesus willed to be the rock of the Church.

It is easy to understand, then, how the Holy See follows with solicitude your cultural preparation, with the intention of ensuring for you easy possession of all those instruments, notions, and knowledge which will be necessary for the exercise of your apostolate. However, what is important above all, for the Pope and for this Apostolic See, is your sanctification; your exemplary priestly life, animated by deep convictions of faith, by a vision of the world and of history that is always theological, because the priest, as I said recently to the Parish Priests and Clergy of Rome, "is, placed at the very centre of the mystery of Christ, who constantly embraces humanity and the world, the visible and invisible creation". You will not be able to carry out your particular ministry fruitfully if your heart is not full of the dedication of Christ, in order to act, you too, "in persona Christi", for the salvation of brothers. Human knowledge, necessary though it is, of the languages, the customs, the traditions and the history of the peoples whom you approach, would be vain and ineffective, if you did not bring in your heart the spirit of Christ who, in adherence to the Father's plan of salvation, gave himself for us.

I wish to address a special wish to those of you who are about to leave the Academy to assume, before long, their first office in the various Pontifical Representations. May the Lord sustain your work with his grace; the Pope, be certain, accompanies you with his benevolence, his affection and his prayer.

Invoking on all the protection of the Blessed Virgin, I willingly and gratefully bless your beloved President, his collaborators, the whole teaching staff and each of you, with particular warmth, together with your families, as a token of abundant heavenly gifts and consolations.

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