



The Holy See

DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II AGLI ALUNNI DELLA PONTIFICIA ACCADEMIA ECCLESIASTICA*

Lunedì, 2 giugno 1986

1. It is always a joy for me to meet with you, who, called by the Holy See with the consent of your bishops, are preparing, with laborious commitment, to serve the very mission of the Successor of Peter to the peoples and the nations of the most diverse parts of the world.

I greet all of you with affection, and also I extend cordial greetings to the President Archbishop Justin Rigali, who with zeal and competence devotes himself to the care of your formation and of your human, cultural and spiritual preparation.

2. The task for which you are preparing yourselves is a service set under the sign of faith and love: faith in Christ, Redeemer of man and of the world, and sincere love of him and of his Church.

It is above all an ecclesiastical task: you are called to collaborate in the building up of the Church, serving the ministry of Peter with the Christian communities to which you will be sent. And it is also a service to the people of our times, in that particularly delicate field, as you well know, of diplomatic activity. This activity is to be understood as the faithful sharing of the universal apostolic responsibilities of the Holy See in the relations with States and civil powers, working together to promote the great ideals of justice, peace, solidarity, values that are indispensable for the full safeguarding of the dignity of the human person.

3. Your formation programme, therefore, while deepening the cultural and professional aspects, must give top priority to the full maturation of your priestly charism, with all of the resources that this involves by way of doctrinal and spiritual preparation, as well as generous and tireless dedication to the service of God and of the Church and to the salvation of souls.

Your task is not so much an office to fulfil as it is a service of charity, a pastoral ministry to be lived.

The basic nourishment and the inexhaustible source of your generosity and of your commitment will always be your intimate union with Christ and your active participation in the mysteries of salvation and especially in the Eucharist, in

which you should always find the centre of your life and of your activity.

Even if assigned to a particular office, and observing fully the duties that this implies and with the competence that it requires, you must nevertheless always regard yourselves first of all as priests, pastors, apostles, stewards of the mysteries of God, directors of souls and, I would go even further, victims, of love with Christ crucified. In this conscientious fulfilment of your priestly ministry you will find the secret of your success not only in the spiritual field, but also in that of diplomacy, as true representatives of the Church and of the Holy See.

4. The soul of the Church's tireless activity in the world, the mysterious force that makes it possible for her not to be dominated by events, but rather capable of overcoming the innumerable trials to which history exposes her, consists precisely in this intimate union she has with her crucified and risen Spouse, through the liturgy, which for this reason is, as the Council says, "the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed and, at the same time, the fount from which all her power flows" (Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 10). If this is true for the Church as a whole, it is so in particular for the priest, whose "pastoral charity" springs above all from the Eucharistic Sacrifice, which - as the Council again teaches - "is therefore the centre and root of the whole life of the priest" (Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 14).

I would like then to recommend that you see to it that the Ecclesiastical Academy be a true priestly community, one whose whole day is centred around the celebration of the Eucharist, drawing strength and impetus from it for the daily tasks and making your labours, plans, and hopes converge in it as a human contribution to unite to the offering of the divine victim. The Holy Mass, spiritual summit of your every day, will thus become the point of equilibrium which will give unity and harmony to your whole life.

It is through the development of an authentic eucharistic devotion that you will find the strength and the perseverance necessary to accept voluntarily and profit from the educational discipline proper to the Academy, so as to acquire those virtues of availability, balance, prudence and wisdom which will be extremely necessary in the accomplishment of the often delicate tasks that will be entrusted to you.

5. May the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom you have honoured with fervent devotion in the course of the recently concluded month of May follow you along your path and in your preparation. May she who, as the Council says, is a "type" of the Church, being at once her Mother and her most chosen member, teach you that profound love for the Church which will be necessary and profitable for you in the mission that awaits you. May her intercession help you to live a communion with the Church and with its Pastors - a profound and exemplary communion, generous and full of conviction. Your entire life is at the service of the Church. Never forget that.

With these good wishes and exhortations, I invoke on you, on your directors and teachers the abundance of the Holy Spirit's gifts, while with sincere love I impart to all a special and generous Apostolic

Blessing.

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