



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
TO THE COMMUNITY
OF THE PONTIFICAL SPANISH COLLEGE IN ROME**

Friday, 1 December 2000

Dear Rectors and Superiors,

Dear Students of the Pontifical Spanish College of St Joseph in Rome,

1. I am pleased to greet you cordially at this meeting which you desired in order to reaffirm your affection and fidelity to the Successor of Peter. In this way you are also putting special emphasis on the celebration of the fifth centenary of the birth of St John of Avila, patron of Spanish secular clergy, while joining in the initiatives of your country's Episcopate to promote a significant renewal of priests during this year of the Great Jubilee. I am grateful for the kind words of your rector, Fr Lope Rubio Parrado, who expressed your sentiments and hopes of serving the Church faithfully as she faces the challenges of the new evangelization.

Your presence reminds me of my two visits to the present-day home of the Spanish College in Rome and, in particular, allows me to feel the closeness of your Dioceses and places of origin, as well as the enthusiasm and welcome of your people, whom I have had the opportunity to visit during my unforgettable pastoral journeys to Spain. When you have the occasion, please give them all my greetings and affection.

2. The Spanish College welcomes each of you, sent by your Bishop to enrich your local Church with a broader academic training and a more universal experience of the Church.

Both these aspects are supremely important for today's priest, who is called to proclaim the Gospel in contexts which are more and more varied, changing and, at the same time, closely connected to one another. A deep intellectual understanding of the Christian message enables him properly to adapt to the various situations, just as an intense experience of the Church's

mystery makes possible an evangelization which originates in and aims at full communion in the Gospel of Christ, faithfully transmitted by the Apostles in full communion with Peter, who received the task of strengthening his brethren in faith (cf. *Lk 22: 32*).

In this regard, your stay in Rome gives you the opportunity to become acquainted with the riches of other ecclesial realities, to associate with priests from various Dioceses, and thus to cultivate a spirit open to broader and more universal horizons. For this reason the Spanish College helps "to preserve the unity of efforts in a climate of apostolic collaboration and to promote the multifaceted life of the People of God, by acting as a principle of unity and harmony amid the diversity of opinions and situations" (Paul VI, *Address to the Spanish College*, 13 November 1965).

Also keep in mind the principle of unity, as you live in this Church of Rome where, as St Irenaeus said, "those who meet in every place have preserved the apostolic Tradition" (*Adv. Haer.*, III, 3, 2). Moreover, closeness to the memory of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul and the first martyrs is doubtless a source of evangelizing vigour and ecclesial vitality, because it allows you to see more clearly the close link between any project or pastoral action, however remote the place where it is carried out, and the very origins of the Church's mission.

3. In Spain the Holy Spirit continues to inspire many initiatives to strengthen your people's faith and give splendour to their expressions of it, even when no lack of difficulties impede a greater flourishing of the Gospel in your land. With your academic training and the experience of the years spent in Rome, you will be able to give new energy to the efforts of your many countrymen and fellow citizens, so that in Spanish society a worldly spirit will not prevail over God's Word.

The ever timely example of St John of Avila will help you in this task. He summed up his programme in a simple piece of advice: "pray, meditate, study" (*Letter*, 2, 285, to Friar Alfonso de Vergara). Indeed, meditation and an intense spiritual life make it possible to transmit with conviction Christ's mystery, which fills the priest's life and is so necessary to a generation that often suffers from an emptiness of life and lack of meaning. Study, in turn, encourages a correct understanding of doctrine and thereby the ability to teach it correctly in every concrete situation.

This is the programme he faithfully followed, while bearing the witness of a holy life and leaving many writings filled with sound doctrine and eloquent preaching. Both continue to be timely, and the fact that a new edition has recently made them more accessible to all is a great satisfaction. I invite you to imitate the example of your patron saint, his constant enthusiasm to bring Christ to others, his concern for the well-being of his fellow priests, his special sensitivity to new situations and his unyielding fidelity to the Church.

4. May the Blessed Virgin, who is venerated in your college as the Mother of Clemency and has accompanied all the students for over 100 years, sustain your good intentions. May she and your blessed founder, Manuel Domingo y Sol, obtain the necessary graces for you to imitate Jesus

Christ, the Eternal High Priest. As a pledge of these fervent hopes, I am pleased to give you my Apostolic Blessing, which I willingly extend to the Community of the Servants of St Joseph and to the college's staff and other assistants.

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