



The Holy See

ADDRESS (VIA-VIDEO) OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL PRIESTS' CONVENTION IN MALTA

Thursday, 21 October 2004

Your Eminence,

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,

Dear Priests, 1. I most willingly join you in spirit at your gathering in Malta for an important spiritual meeting. I greet you with affection and through you I greet the communities from which you come. You are meeting in Malta, an island that cherishes vivid memories of St Paul's stay. Won over by Jesus, he became a humble and courageous servant of the Gospel to the point of forcefully asserting: "*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me*" (Gal 2: 20). 2. Every priest, called by divine Providence to help men and women, young people and adults to follow in the footsteps of the divine Teacher, can recognize his programme in Paul's words. The Church needs holy priests who will in turn "forge saints for the new millennium". The Lord invites you, dear friends, to be his apostles first and foremost *through the holiness of your lives*. It is your task to make vibrant everywhere the force of the words of Gospel truth that alone can work deep changes in the human heart and give a person peace. 3. Dear priests, if you let Christ take hold of you, as did the Apostle Paul, you too will be able to proclaim on the highways of the world *the infinite mercy of the heavenly Father*, "who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tm 2: 4). You will thus become credible teachers of Gospel life and prophets of hope. In our troubled and divided world, marked by violence and war, some are wondering if it is still possible to speak of hope. Yet at this very moment it is indispensable to present courageously *the true and full hope of humankind*: Christ the Lord. 4. The heavenly model from which to draw inspiration is always the Virgin Mary. The humble young girl of Nazareth showed the Angel Gabriel her total availability to do God's will: "*Behold*", Mary said, "*I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word*" (Lk 1: 38). She subsequently confirmed that initial "*fiat*" at every moment of her life, even at Calvary, where Jesus entrusted her as he was dying to John, "*Behold, your mother!*" (Jn 19: 27). From that day, Mary became Mother to all believers and especially your Mother, dear priests, to accompany you on your daily journey. 5. Turn to her constantly in your ministry. The Virgin will help you present to children and young people, to families and the sick, to business people and workers, to intellectuals and politicians, in other words, to all humanity, the Blessed Fruit of her womb, the crucified and risen Redeemer. May everyone welcome him, love him and be faithful to him to the very end of their life! My affectionate Blessing to everyone!

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