



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE SIXTH MEETING
OF THE 11th ORDINARY COUNCIL
OF THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS**

Monday, 21 January 2008

Dear and Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,

I am pleased to welcome you while you are participating at the meeting of the Ordinary Council of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops in preparation for the General Ordinary Assembly, convoked for this coming 5-26 October. I greet and thank Archbishop Nikola Eterovic, Secretary General, for his kind words; and I extend my grateful sentiments to all members of both the General Secretariat of the Synod and the Ordinary Council of the General Secretariat. I greet all and each of you with sincere affection.

In the recent Encyclical Letter *Spe Salvi* on Christian hope, I wished to underline the "social character of hope" (n. 14). "Being in communion with Jesus Christ", I wrote, "draws us into his 'being for all'; it makes it our own way of being. He commits us to live for others, but only through communion with him does it become truly possible to be there for others", since there exists a "connection between the love of God and responsibility for others" (*ibid.*, n. 28) that enables one to avoid falling into the individualism of salvation and hope. I believe that one can discover this fruitful principle effectively applied in the synodal experience, where the encounter becomes communion and solicitude for all the Churches (cf. II Cor 11: 28) emerges in the concern for all.

The next General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops will reflect on "*The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church*". Among the Ecclesial Community's many and great duties in today's world, I emphasize evangelization and ecumenism. They are centred on the Word of God and at the same time are justified and sustained by it. As the Church's missionary activity with its evangelizing work is inspired and aims at the merciful revelation of the Lord, ecumenical dialogue

cannot base itself on words of human wisdom (cf. I Cor 2: 13) or on neat, expedient strategies, but must be animated solely by constant reference to the original Word that God consigned to his Church so that it be read, interpreted and lived in communion with her. In this area, St Paul's doctrine reveals a very special power, obviously founded on divine revelation but also on his own apostolic experience, which confirmed anew the awareness that not wisdom and human eloquence, but only the power of the Holy Spirit builds the Church in the faith (cf. I Cor 1: 22-24; 2: 4ff.).

By a happy coincidence, St Paul will be particularly venerated this year, thanks to the celebration of the Pauline Year. The next Synod taking place on the Word of God will therefore offer to the Church's contemplation, and principally to her Pastors' contemplation, the witness also of this great Apostle and herald of God's Word. To the Lord, whom he first persecuted and then to whom he consecrated his entire being, Paul remains faithful even to death. May his example be an encouragement for all to accept the Word of salvation and translate it into daily life through the faithful following of Christ. The various ecclesial organisms consulted in view of the Assembly next October have dedicated their attention to the Word of God. The Synod Fathers will focus on it once they have become familiar with the preparatory documents, the *Lineamenta* and *Instrumentum laboris*, which you yourselves in the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops have contributed to creating. Thus, they will be able to discuss among themselves, but above all, gathered in collegial communion, to listen to the Word of life which God has entrusted to the loving care of his Church, so that it is courageously and convincingly proclaimed, with the *parresia* of the Apostles, to those near and far. Indeed, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, everyone is given the possibility to encounter the living Word that is Jesus Christ.

Dear and venerable Brothers, as members of the Ordinary Council of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, you render a praiseworthy service to the Church, since the synodal organism constitutes a qualified institution to promote the truth and unity of pastoral dialogue within the Mystical Body of Christ. Thank you for what you do, and not without sacrifice. May God reward you! Let us continue to pray together so that the Lord will make the Synodal Assembly fruitful for the whole Church. With this wish, I warmly impart a special Apostolic Blessing to you and to the Communities entrusted to your pastoral care, invoking the intercession of the Most Holy Mother of the Lord and of Sts Peter and Paul, who in the Liturgy, together with the other Apostles, we call the "pillars and foundation of the city of God".