



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO THE SEMINARIANS OF THE CAPRANICA COLLEGE

Saturday, 15 January 2000

Your Eminence,

Dear Students of the Almo Collegio Capranica!

1. I am pleased to extend my cordial welcome to you. I first greet Cardinal Camillo Ruini and thank him for his kind words on behalf of you all. I extend my grateful greeting to the rector, Mons. Michele Pennisi, and to the entire Capranica community, whose meeting today strengthens the bond linking this ancient college with the Successor of Peter. In fact, as one of the first institutes for the formation of candidates for the priesthood in Rome, the Capranica is a centuries-old witness to steadfast communion with the Apostolic See.

Your visit this year has a special meaning, since it takes place during the journey of conversion and renewal that characterizes the Holy Year. We could therefore ask, in the context of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, what appropriate reflection might be required of an educational institution like yours, which aims at the human, spiritual and cultural formation of candidates for the ordained ministry?

2. In this regard, the Jubilee will certainly spur you to rediscover the deep meaning of life as self-giving. A young man training for the priesthood must adopt a lifestyle of self-sacrificing love which is expressed in his basic goals and concrete decisions to make himself available to God and to his brethren. But where can he find the strength for this constant offering of himself other than in a close, intense relationship with God, the inexhaustible source of love for neighbour?

The source and summit of this important spiritual relationship is naturally the Eucharist, the centre of every ecclesial community's life and mission. In this regard, I express my deep appreciation of your offer to lead the Eucharistic adoration at the *Basilica of St Agnes in Agone* every Thursday

evening throughout this Holy Year. By offering pilgrims a valuable service, you will not fail to receive an abundance of grace for your priestly formation from the Eucharistic Christ.

You are called in the near future to be authentic "examples to the flock" (1 Pt 5: 3) which will be entrusted to you. To be such, you must acquire the inner dispositions and specific attitudes that, interacting with and complementing each other, will form the connective tissue of your priestly personality. I am thinking of human formation with its relational dynamics and particular values; of spiritual formation, which is the development of one's whole life with the strength that comes from the Holy Spirit; of intellectual formation, which enables one to penetrate the divine and human mysteries, insofar as one can; of formation for Church ministry, which means sharing the "pastoral charity" of the Heart of Christ in service to the Church and to the world (cf. *Pastores dabo vobis*, nn. 43-59).

3. Your preparation for the priesthood unfolds in a community context. This choice is not prompted by practical or contingent reasons, but is linked to the very nature of the Church, a community gathered by the Lord, attentive to the Word, joined by bonds of deep communion and directed to the mission of bringing the Gospel to the world.

Dear friends, do not live this community experience as a temporary phase associated with your seminary years, but as the mainstay of your entire priestly life. The vocational project, which embraces a priest's whole life, is a community project, since a vocation is always a co-vocation, that is, a call from God to live and to "be with others and for others".

Inspired by these deep convictions, continue courageously on your way, renewing your fidelity to Christ every day and responding with ever greater openness to the needs of your brethren and to the Church's universal mission.

May you be protected by the Virgin Mary, who gave her total "yes" to God in the house at Nazareth. May St Agnes, patroness of your College, intercede for you: through her witness of virginity and martyrdom she invites everyone to follow faithfully the Lamb sacrificed for the world's salvation.

As for me, I assure you of a remembrance in my prayer and I wish you a new year filled with good things. I accompany these wishes with my Apostolic Blessing, which I impart to each of you and gladly extend to your relatives and loved ones.

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