



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE COLLEGE OF PERSONNEL OF
THE PONTIFICAL ANTECHAMBER***

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 5 January 2006*

Dear Friends,

Our meeting is taking place in the evocative atmosphere of the Christmas season at the beginning of 2006, and it is a particularly favourable opportunity for me to offer each one of you my best wishes for a serene and fruitful New Year. I warmly greet you and I am pleased to receive you at this special Audience.

I can say that you are at home here and I am sincerely grateful for the prestigious service you carry out, making many sacrifices, since you are constantly required to be available at Audiences, ceremonies and official receptions, whenever the Pope meets Heads of State, Prime Ministers and Ambassadors accredited to the Holy See.

I wanted to hold this meeting with you in order to tell you how much I appreciate the concern and cordiality with which you carry out your special role. In these first months of my Pontificate I have been able to experience even more closely and directly the spirit that motivates you and all those who work in the Papal Antechamber.

Moreover, I know of your devotion to the Successor of Peter, for which I also thank you. May God reward you for it.

I would like to address a special greeting to your wives who have kindly accompanied you today as well as to all those who have desired to be present at our meeting, which we could well describe as a family gathering.

Your praiseworthy College, coordinated by the Dean, is dependent on the Prefecture of the Pontifical Household and has centuries of history behind it. Times change and customs and traditions evolve, but the spirit with which each College member is called to work beside the one whom divine Providence calls to govern the universal Church remains the same.

Since this house, the Pontifical Household, is home to all believers, it is also your duty, dear Personnel of the Antechamber, always to make it welcoming to everyone who comes to meet the Pope.

Dear friends, your service also entails a diligent commitment to witness to the One who is the true Lord and Master of the house: Jesus Christ. This requires you to continue an ongoing dialogue with him in prayer, which is increased by friendship with and closeness to him and the constant readiness to witness to his welcoming love to everyone you meet.

If this is the spirit in which you carry out your tasks - and I am sure that this is the case for all of you - then they can become a special apostolate and an opportunity to communicate with courtesy and cordiality the joy of being Christ's disciples in every situation and at every moment of our lives.

Tomorrow, we will be celebrating the Solemnity of the Epiphany and my thoughts go to Mary, who presented the Child Jesus to the Magi who had come from afar to worship him. Just as the Virgin presented Jesus to the Magi, so she continues to offer him to humanity.

Let us welcome him from her hands: Christ fulfils the deepest expectations of our hearts and gives full meaning to all our projects and acts. May he be present in families and reign everywhere with the power of his love.

And may Mary's motherly intercession obtain that you increasingly experience profound communion with him every day, a communion that begins on earth and will reach its fullness in heaven, where we will be, as St Paul recalls, "fellow citizens of the saints and members of the household of God" (*Eph 2: 19*).

For my part, I would like to assure you of my remembrance in prayer that the Lord may accompany you throughout the year that has just begun, bless your families and make your activities fruitful with good. With these sentiments, I wholeheartedly impart to you a special Apostolic Blessing, which I willingly extend to all your loved ones.

