



The Holy See

MASS FOR THE COMMUNITY OF THE ROMAN MAJOR SEMINARY

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Feast of Our Lady of Trust

Sunday, 14 June 1998

Dear Friends,

1. Last February on the annual feast day of Our Lady of Trust, patroness of the Roman Major Seminary, I was unable to come and visit your community as I had hoped. I am therefore particularly pleased to welcome you today to this Eucharistic celebration in the unique setting of the Lourdes Grotto of the Vatican Gardens, which reminds us of the Immaculate Virgin's spiritual presence.

I greet the Cardinal Vicar, who also wanted to be present, the rector, Mons. Pierino Fragnelli, the superiors and all of you, dear seminarians.

We are celebrating the Eucharist together on this 11th Sunday in Ordinary Time. The Eucharistic sacrifice is the source and summit of the Church's life and of our personal journey of sanctification (cf. *Lumen gentium*, n. 11). Last Thursday, on the Solemnity of *Corpus Christi*, we gathered in front of the Basilica of St John Lateran to celebrate the Eucharist, and together we accompanied the Blessed Sacrament in the traditional procession to St Mary Major. Today we are celebrating this same mystery *beneath the loving gaze of the Mother of priests*.

2. The Blessed Virgin, dear friends, wants to lead all men to Christ; she knows that to do this she needs generous service from the holy ministers of the Eucharist. This is why *Mary shows you the altar*, which, from the day of a priest's ordination, is where his daily meeting with the Lord culminates. In fact, it is primarily at Holy Mass that the priest makes progress in his conformity to Christ.

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (*Gal 2:20*). Paul's words to the Galatians which we heard a few moments ago in the second reading are a synthesis of the existential fruit of Eucharistic

communion: the indwelling of Christ in the soul, brought about by the Holy Spirit. Who, more than the priest, is called to make these words his own and to offer them as a plan of life? Who, more than he, lives wholly on the Bread of eternal life, given by Christ for the world's salvation?

3. Mass is truly the centre of the priest's life, the centre of all his days. This centrality is thus the primary objective of the seminary's formation programme, which requires the conscious and total co-operation of each candidate for the priesthood. First of all, the seminarian should *passionately love the Eucharist*: he should recognize that his vocation directs him towards a fervent and ever deeper participation in the Sacrifice of the Mass, a participation which at a certain point acquires the meaning of a most personal call. The words "do this in memory of me" speak to his heart with profound eloquence. He recognizes the Eucharist as the living sacrament of Christ's grace and so feels he has nothing to offer in exchange but himself.

When this response of faith and love matures in a young man, the Church's heart rejoices; the heart of Mary rejoices, as her motherly concern anticipates and accompanies the flowering of every individual vocation. Invoked by the title *Our Lady of Trust*, she watches in particular over each of you, dear students of the Roman Major Seminary. At this Mass I pray for you, that you may become holy priests. I pray for your superiors and teachers, that they may guide you on this path. I also pray for your relatives who are anxiously following your steps with the discreet attention Mary had for her Son Jesus.

4. Through Mary Immaculate may you always nourish a strong *sense of God*, of his gratuitous and prevenient love, of his initiative of grace which deserves a generous response like that of the woman sinner mentioned in today's Gospel, who was not ashamed to express her grateful love for Jesus, her Saviour. Thus you will always be convinced witnesses to God's merciful love, a never-ending source of conversion and forgiveness, and once you become priests, zealous ministers of the sacrament of Reconciliation.

The Holy Spirit accomplishes all this, working in the depths of your hearts. Just as he moulded the priestly heart of Christ from Mary's womb to the ultimate sacrifice on the Cross and to the fullness of life of the Resurrection, may he form your hearts for the salvation of souls and the glory of God with the full maturity of Christ the Good Shepherd.

Amen!

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