



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO A GROUP OF PRIESTS
FROM THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

Friday, 7 May 1982

My dear brother Priests,

1. It is a pleasure for me to receive this morning all of you who make up the Institute for Continuing Theological Education at Casa Santa Maria. Your presence here gives us the opportunity for a brief reflection together *on the priesthood* that we all share - the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

2. During these past weeks you have had an extraordinary opportunity to think about the priesthood, and to consider it in the context of Christ's love and of the Church's mission of evangelization. You have also been able to relive the whole mystery of redemption in its historical setting - where it actually took place. As you meditate on the blessings that have influenced your priesthood, there is yet another event which has deeply touched all of you in your priestly lives. It is the great ecclesial event of this century: *the Second Vatican Council*. And among the special legacies of that Council is its teaching on the priesthood.

3. The Council has given to us priest many insights about ourselves, about what is important in our lives, and about what contribution we can truly make to the world. Without minimizing in any way all the many possibilities of pastoral service that are open to the priest of today, the Council did not hesitate to declare its absolute priorities. And it did this repeatedly. The essential mission of the priesthood is found *in the Eucharist*. Your identity and mine are fixed forever in the Eucharistic celebration, that action of Jesus which in turn is the fullest and most effective proclamation of his whole Gospel message: Christ has died! Christ is risen! Christ will come again! The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church expresses this truth in the following words: Priests "above all exercise their sacred ministry in Eucharistic worship" (*Lumen Gentium*, 28). And the Decree on the Priesthood adds: "Priests fulfill their chief duty in the mystery of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. In it the

work of our redemption continues to be carried out” (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 13).

4. My dear brother priests, what the world really wants from us, and truly needs, is that the mystery of redemption should be made accessible to the men, women and children of our day. And it is through the Eucharist that *Christ’s redemption touches human hearts*, and transforms human history. It is through devotion to the Eucharist that we are enabled to read accurately the “signs of the times” and to understand all the requirements that genuine “aggiornamento” makes on us personally. It is in our faithful Eucharistic ministry that we are fully effective ministers of the Gospel and servants of Jesus Christ and his people. It is only through the Eucharist that we can be true pastors of our people and relevant spiritual leaders in our communities.

May a deeper appreciation of your Eucharistic vocation, my dear brothers, be a lasting result of your stay in Rome. And through the intercession of Mary the Mother of Jesus may you always find your joy and fulfillment in the Eucharist.