



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO A GROUP OF GERMAN-SPEAKING SEMINARY RECTORS**

Tuesday, 17 March 1998

Dear Brothers in the Priesthood,

1. I cordially welcome you to the Apostolic Palace and assure you that I was pleased to grant your request for this meeting. This year you chose Rome as the site for your conference, to engage in fraternal conversation near the tombs of the Apostles and to have discussions with representatives of the Holy See.

"Come and see" (Jn 1:39). Jesus addressed this invitation to the two disciples of John who asked him where he lived. Indeed, those responsible for priestly formation are asked always to keep this scene in mind: it is repeated in the same way in vocation stories even in our time. You have the role that Andrew once had with respect to his brother Simon: he suggested and arranged the meeting with Jesus. Then "he brought him to Jesus" (Jn 1:42). You too are called to foster in the young people entrusted to you the beginnings and growth of an interior relationship with Christ. What is studied in theology must become rooted in the heart. Important means to this end are prayer and the liturgy, meditation on Sacred Scripture and the witness of one's own life; in this way candidates for the priesthood become priests.

2. The fact that the Church today is often described as a *communio* makes us realize that this *communio* is realized in the most profound way in the celebration of the Eucharist. There it takes place in the consecration of the bread which is broken and distributed. For this reason the daily celebration of the Eucharist and frequent Eucharistic adoration occupy a central place in priestly formation. Everything the priest does in carrying out his daily duties is, in a way, an expression of the Eucharist: Jesus offers himself to men and shares himself with them out of love.

3. In addition to the cultivation of Eucharistic life, fraternal communication is also part of *communio*. Just as the *credo* of the Christian is replaced by the *credimus* of the community, so the *adsum* of the individual priesthood candidate is replaced by the *adsumus* of the presbyterate, in which priests, according to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, are united to one another "by an intimate sacramental brotherhood" (*Presbyterorum ordinis* n. 8). The seminary should

train the students to see that, despite all the differences, they are sent by their Bishops to take part in the same work. In different tasks they carry out the same priestly service for the people. What Paul wrote to the Corinthians about existing quarrels and threatening divisions is still valid today: "No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 3:11).

4. Our age needs priests who follow the path that leads from a rationalistic conception of what is possible to belief in divine Revelation, from knowledge to wisdom and from speculation to contemplation, in order to communicate all this to men. Almost 200 years ago the theologian and Bishop Johann Michael Sailer followed this path and formed a generation of priests which made a substantial contribution to Church renewal in all German-speaking lands. He prepared a short formula of faith that is particularly significant on the threshold of the third millennium: God in Christ is the salvation of a sinful world.

Dear brothers in the priesthood, while expressing my appreciation of your untiring commitment to priestly formation, I offer the heartfelt wish that you will succeed, as elder brothers in the faith, in leading to Christ the seminarians entrusted to you, as Andrew did his brother Simon. For this I sincerely impart my Apostolic Blessing.

© Copyright 1998 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana