



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE COMMUNITY
OF THE PONTIFICAL ROMAN SEMINARY**

Saturday, 13 February 1999

Your Eminence,

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and the Priesthood,

Dear Seminarians,

Brothers and Sisters,

1. It is a great joy for me to be with you here again at the Roman Major Seminary for the feast of Our Lady of Trust. I greet you all affectionately, starting with the rector, Mons. Pierino Fragnelli, the superiors, all of you dear seminarians, the sisters and the staff, your families and the young people of the "school of prayer".

We are grateful to Mons. Marco Frisina, the musicians and choir members who have performed an oratorio dedicated to the Apostle Peter. This beautiful piece had us meditate on the priestly vocation as a call to become "fishers of men", according to the divine Master's invitation to the first disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee (cf. Mk 1:16). The Lord wished to entrust the net of the "kingdom of heaven" (cf. Mt 13:47) to the hands of the Apostles and of their successors and co-workers, the Bishops and priests.

The fisherman's task is a hard one. It requires constant effort and patience. Above all, it calls for faith in God's power. The priest is a man of trust, who repeats with the Apostle Peter: "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets" (Lk 5:5). He knows well we fish for men with the power of God's Word, which has its own intrinsic dynamism. Therefore he is not overcome with haste, but waits and watches attentively to understand God's timing.

2. In the seminary, thanks to the diligent and careful work of our teachers, we learn the secret of Gospel fishing in the school of Christ, under the action of the Holy Spirit. Blessed Mary is an expert guide: She is the Mother of Trust for all Christians and in a special way for the Apostles. We

can imagine her words of comfort and support during the days she spent with the early community waiting for Pentecost. Let us allow her to speak to us as well. When the fatigue of the apostolate makes itself felt and failures lead to discouragement, it is then that the best part of the "fishing" begins, the fishing which relies only "on his word". This is what Mary says again to us, reminding us of the "yes" she gave at the Annunciation: "*Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*".

"*Sicut Maria, ita et Ecclesia*": Ivo of Chartres' saying is the motto you have chosen for this year's celebration. The Church is the teacher of trust for every Christian, and particularly for the apostle and the apostle's co-worker. At this Roman Major Seminary, which is so dear to me, you learn how to fish especially from Mary, Our Lady of Trust, who teaches every seminarian the secret of Gospel fishing. Mary is also a teacher for you young men who are attending the seminary and find here a valuable place for your apostolic formation. May she help you carry out responsibly the important decisions you are making for your future. Be generous; trust in her; trust in Jesus.

3. Dear friends, thank you for giving me this new opportunity to meditate with you on this consoling truth. I also thank you for transforming it into a prayer not only for yourselves, but also for all the priests of the Diocese of Rome. I willingly join you in prayer and, as I ask God to grant each of you persevering fidelity, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to all.

At the end of his visit the Holy Father said extemporaneously:

What the Pope is going to say is also connected with the seminary, with the last seminary: that last seminary, of only a few days' duration, was the Conclave. At the end, when everything had become clear, Cardinal Wyszyński approached me and said: "It would be desirable if you could take the name John Paul". I answered him: "Yes, I was thinking of doing so". That was the last seminary for me. From the Roman Seminary, or from the underground seminary where I studied, to the seminary of the Conclave. The vocation: you must call yourself Peter; you must call yourself John Paul.

I hope that all will go well for you at this Roman Seminary. And then we will see.