



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE RECTOR, STAFF AND SEMINARIANS
OF THE "ALMO COLLEGIO CAPRANICA"**

Monday, 15 January 2001

*Your Eminence,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and the Priesthood,
Dear Students of the "Almo Collegio Capranica",*

1. I am pleased to welcome you at this special audience, which has become a welcome custom, shortly before the liturgical memorial of St Agnes, your special patroness. I offer my gratitude to Cardinal Camillo Ruini, President of the Episcopal Commission which oversees the college, for his words expressing the sentiments of everyone present. I extend my cordial greeting to the Bishops of the Commission, to the rector, Mons. Michele Pennisi, to the superiors and to you, dear seminarians of the Capranica community. It is entitled to be listed among the most ancient and illustrious institutions dedicated to the spiritual and theological formation of priests for the Diocese of Rome, and is open to serving Dioceses in Italy and other countries.

This year your visit has particular significance, because it is taking place shortly after the close of the Jubilee, which has left to the entire Christian community a great legacy to be accepted and brought to maturity, in order to guide its steps in the new millennium.

2. In my Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, I have described the essential features of this precious legacy and presented them for the reflection of all believers as we pass from one century and millennium to another. I signed the document in the presence of the Ecclesial Community during the solemn liturgical celebration at the end of the Jubilee. Today I would like to suggest that you examine this Letter, and I invite you to make it the object of your reflection, to draw from it inspiration for your personal and community journey. I would especially urge you to reflect on what I consider the essential core of the Jubilee legacy: *the commitment to set out anew from Christ*. Is

not contemplation of Christ's face the heart of all the human, cultural and spiritual formation to which you are devoting yourselves as candidates for the ordained ministry?

Precisely because you are called to follow the Master more closely, you are invited to "contemplate his face" more deeply (*Novo millennio ineunte*, n. 16). You, in turn, will then be witnesses and guides for the men and women of our time, enabling yourselves to lead them to the discovery of Christ's beauty and majesty.

"We wish to see Jesus" (*Jn 12: 21*): the desire expressed by certain Greek pilgrims shortly before the Passover is also found in the hearts of many of our contemporaries. Like Philip and Andrew (cf. *Jn 12: 22*), you too must be able to lead them to a direct experience of the divine Master. This presupposes that you maintain a deep, habitual communion with him by constantly directing your activity and your whole life to the person of Christ. The more your gaze is set on his face, the better you will be able to follow faithfully in his footsteps. You will thus advance on the path of spirituality and will know the joy that belongs to genuine Gospel workers.

3. *Set out anew from Christ!* This is your programme in this first phase of the new millennium. The Risen One is continually present and mysteriously at work in the community of his disciples. His promise: "Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (*Mt 28: 20*), is a constant comfort.

Dear students, we are sustained in this effort by the example and intercession of a countless host of saints and martyrs who in 20 centuries of history remained faithful to Christ. How many of them have brought glory to our venerable Church of Rome! They include your special patroness, St Agnes, who is particularly dear to you, and who in virginity and martyrdom lived and witnessed to her own personal fidelity to Christ.

I entrust you to the heavenly intercession of this Roman martyr, so that you may deeply contemplate the face of Christ. May Mary, Mother of the Church, also protect you and obtain for each of you a year full of spiritual and cultural fruits. With these sentiments, I impart a special blessing to you, students, to your superiors and formation directors and to the entire Capranica community.