



The Holy See

EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATION WITH THE ROMAN SEMINARIANS

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Pauline Chapel

Sunday, 19 November 1978

1. Our meeting today has the character of a special audience. It is—if it can be said so—a eucharistic audience. We are not "holding" it, but "celebrating" it. This is a holy liturgy. The Superiors of the seminaries of this diocese are concelebrating with me, the new Bishop of Rome, and with the Cardinal Vicar; and the students of the Roman Seminary, of the "Capranica" Seminary and of the Minor Seminary are participants in this Eucharist.

The Bishop of Rome wishes to visit his seminaries, but, in the mean- time, you have come today to him for this sacred Audience!

The Holy Mass is also an audience. Perhaps the comparison is too bold, perhaps it is improper, perhaps it is too "human", I take the liberty, however, of using it: this is one of the audiences that Christ himself grants continually to the whole of mankind—which he grants to a given eucharistic community—and to each of us who constitute this assembly.

2. During the audience we listen to the one who is speaking. And we, too, try to speak to him in such a way that he can listen to us.

In the Eucharistic Liturgy Christ speaks in the first place with the force of his Sacrifice. It is a very concise and at the same time burning speech. It can be said that we know this speech by heart; every time, however, it presents itself to us as new, sacred, revealing. It contains in itself the whole mystery of love and truth, because truth lives on love and love on truth. God, who is Truth and Love, manifested himself in the history of creation and in the history of salvation. He repropose this history by means of this redeeming sacrifice, which he handed down to us in the sacramental sign, in order that we may not only think of it again in memory, but may renew it and celebrate it

again. In celebrating the Eucharistic Sacrifice, we are introduced every time to the mystery of God himself and also to the whole depth of human reality. The Eucharist is an announcement of death and resurrection. The paschal mystery is expressed in it as the beginning of a new Time and as the final expectation.

It is Christ himself who speaks, and we never stop listening. We continually wish for this, his power of salvation, which has become a divine "guarantee" of the words of eternal life.

He has words of eternal life (cf. Jn 6:68).

3. What we want to say to him is always ours, because it springs from our human experiences, our desires, but also from our anxieties. It is often a language of suffering, but also of hope. We speak to him of ourselves, of all those who are waiting for us to remind him of them.

What we say is inspired by the Word of God. The liturgy of the word precedes the eucharistic liturgy. With regard to the word to which we have listened to today, we would have so many things to say to Christ, during this sacred Audience.

We wish, therefore, to speak to him in the first place of this particular talent—perhaps not one only, but five—which we have received: the priestly vocation, the call to set out towards the priesthood by entering the seminary. Every talent is an obligation. We feel all the more obliged by this talent, not to waste it, not "to hide it under the earth", but to make it bear fruit: by means of a thorough preparation, study, work on one's own ego, and a conscious formation "of the new man" who, giving himself to Christ unreservedly in the priestly service, lived in celibacy, will be able to become in a special way a man "for others".

We also wish to speak to Christ about that way which leads each of us to the priesthood, to speak each about his own life. In it we try to persevere with fear of God, as the Psalmist invites us to do. This is the way that brings us out of the darkness to lead us towards the light, as St Paul writes. We wish to be "children of light". We wish to keep watch, we wish to be moderate, sober, and responsible for ourselves and for others.

Each of you will certainly have many other things to say during this Audience—each of you, Superiors, and each of you, beloved Students.

And what shall I, your new Bishop, say to Christ?

In the first place, I wish to tell him: I thank you for all those you have given me. I want to say to him further (I repeat it to him continually): The harvest is abundant! Send workers for your harvest.

And I want to say to him furthermore: Keep them in the truth, and grant that they may mature in the grace of the sacrament of the priesthood, for which they are preparing.

I want to say all this to him through his Mother, whom you venerate in the Roman Seminary, looking at the image of "Our Lady of Trust", to whom the Servant of God, John XXIII, was particularly devoted.

I entrust, therefore, to this Mother each of you and all three Seminaries of my new diocese. Amen.

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