



APOSTOLIC NUNCIATURE
IN THAILAND

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Annual Seminar for Priests
Sampran, 12 july 2011

Excellencies
Reverend Fathers

I'm really happy to meet you today. "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you. " Drawing inspiration from the words of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 22, verse 14, I, too, in this present moment, wish to say: "I longed to spend this moment with you. "

First of all, let me bring you the greetings and the affectionate paternal blessing of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, with the assurance of a special intention for you in His prayers. My presence here today wants to be a witness of His special care for you.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to God for this moment of communion that He has deigned to grant me and, at the same time, to thank Rev. Father Worayut for the invitation and for the opportunity he has given to me to meet you, to know you better and know each other better.

I wanted to spend a few moments with you, Reverend friends, just to express you my friendship and to assure you of my daily prayers, in which I ask the Lord to fill you with His grace and blessings, in order to be always witnesses to His love for all men.

My presence here will also be an encouragement to continue with fidelity and perseverance on your spiritual path and priesthood, especially today, in a society that seems increasingly marked by materialism and lack of spirituality.

Today more than ever, as men chosen by God for a special mission, we must be credible and authentic witnesses to the call that the Lord has addressed to us: "*Come and follow me*". To you, my dear brother priests, I want to talk about our being men of God, entrusted with a very special mission, which, as you know has to be performed in close union with God and must occur in a true and sincere testimony.

St. Charles Borromeo said: "*We conquer souls by the knees*" and again: "*Nothing is so necessary to men of the Church that mental prayer... If you administer the sacraments, my brother, meditate upon what you do; and if you celebrate Mass, think about what you offer; and if you sing, think about who and what you speak; and if you are guiding souls, meditate through what blood they have been saved. So we have the strength to give birth to Christ in us and in others*" (S. Caroli Borromaei" Homelia ad Priests "Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanense Mediolan 1599, 1177-1178).

In fact, prayer should be the basis of our existence and inspiration of all our work. That is why each of us must always find and fortify the needed graces in order to be worthy of the mission the Lord has entrusted to us.

Only at such conditions, dear brothers in the priesthood, we are able to "give his life" for souls, that is to say, be true pastors of the Church of God. It is only thus that the "pastoralis caritas", as says the Vatican Council II states in "Presbyterorum ordinis" n. 14, can reach the vast majority and the priestly ministry is really transforming into the "amoris officium" of which speaks Saint'Augustin. Only then the priest, who welcomes the call to ministry is able to make a choice of love for the Church and souls become his main concern, and become capable of loving the universal Church as well as those who are entrusted to him.

In other words, it is the universal call to holiness, which reflects the eternal will of God and the universal mission of the Church. The fullness of Christian life and perfection of charity are the authentic witness of Christian life, and therefore the perfect accomplishment of the mission of evangelization.

This training should be primarily centered on Christ Himself, who has to be known, loved and imitated, and with Him to transform history until its fulfillment in the heavenly Jerusalem.

But we must be not just witnesses but authentic witnesses. Indeed, in order to grow, the church is called to be built on authentic witnesses. These witnesses are members of the People of God. But, under the configuration to Christ, the priests of course, have a great responsibility to serve as models of witness, since the Church reflects the image of life and consciousness of its priests and their commitment to serving the people of God.

It is precisely for this reason that the priest is constantly called upon to revive the gift that God has placed in him the day of his ordination, watching over his life and his teaching.

As a man, the priest must deepen human sensibility that allows him to understand the needs, the appeals and anticipate the requests of those who he ministers. It is in and through the humanity of the priest that the priest operates. Man among men, the priest is called to share their hopes and expectations, their joys and concerns.

A priest who fails to meet any insertion in an ecclesial community, would certainly not stand as credible model of ministerial life, which is essentially embedded in the concrete context of personal relationships in the community.

You, dear priests, by reason of your vocation, you must live among men, you must know them as the shepherd knows his sheep, and try to bring back those who are lost and to reach those who are not of his flock, so that they also hear the voice of Christ.

In pastoral activity, taking into account the various local issues, it should prevail a spirit of understanding and cooperation between parish and diocesan initiatives, which by their nature are open to wider horizons and instances in general, such as those concerning the world of work, social communications, education, culture, etc..

These bonds of communion within the Church, should lead you to a close union among yourselves. The Eucharist, the supreme source of ecclesial unity, must produce its fruit of active communion, renewed and strengthened every day in the love of Christ.

The practical way to achieve this communion from the Eucharist must be the creation of a true brotherhood; fraternity must bring together all those involved in the same ideal of life, vocation and ecclesial vision, and those who have special titles

among them, as the Gospel says, are "brothers" (Mt 23:8) and must live it in a special way.

This fraternity has to become a living presence and service of others in the parishes, schools, hospitals, in the priestly ministry in the religious house and everywhere, a fraternity which reflects the feelings, attitudes and actions in everyday reality. Lived this way, brotherhood makes your testimony credible. On the contrary, division becomes an obstacle in this "sequela Christi".

Dear Brothers in the priesthood,

Be the promoters of communion within your local church. The communion between you and your bishop, communion between you, Pastors, and the people of God which is entrusted to your pastoral care, fellowship between you and the religious communion among associations and ecclesial movements. In a word, create really one family, taking inspiration from the importance that family has in your culture, where children's relationships with their parents are those of filial respect, reverence, reverential distance, marked attachment, love and obedience.

Members of the presbytery and interrelated by the sacramental brotherhood, the priests of the Diocese will have the same awareness of being a family without any distinction. They will forge links with each particular apostolic charity and brotherhood. The variety of tasks you do, that sometimes could be the cause of divisions, should be, instead means of unity in the multiplicity of ministries that the Lord entrusts to us. The older welcome more young people as brothers and help them with understanding, kindness and patience in their first steps in the exercise of priestly ministry. They must serve as models and examples, particularly good examples. Younger people, in turn, know how to respect age and experience of the elders, who share with them, without pride or arrogance, the problems at the pastoral level.

Consolidate, therefore, my dear brothers in the priesthood, these bonds of unity and communion. Remember that the best witness that you can render to your priesthood, is priestly fraternity among you and your communion with the faithful entrusted to you. May your priestly communities be indeed authentic Christian communities where there is love, joy, sharing, forgiveness and reconciliation.

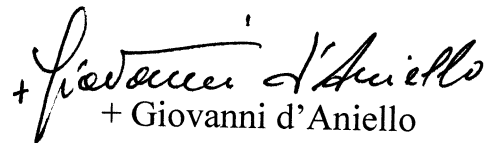
The reality that you carry with you is so sublime, marked with a special character that configures you to Christ the Priest, so you can act on His behalf. It is necessary to have a clear and radical belief of being a priest of Christ, custodian and administrator of the mysteries of God as instruments of salvation for all men. Such certainties of faith has not to make doubt about your identity, neither to question the value of your life and commitment.

So I exhort you, dear brothers in Jesus Christ, to always live as children of God, chosen and called to a very important task, especially in today's world: that of being always and everywhere authentic witnesses your divine filiation, able to show to others God's love for humanity, through a strong and perfect unity and communion among all of you.

I end here my address by reiterating my full confidence and encouraging you to put yours in the One who called you by name even your mother's womb. Our confidence must find its source in this radical love for God, who does not abandon especially those called to the priesthood of the Son, and so speak to Him with confidence. As Saint Paul says in his Letter to the Hebrews: "*Cast not away therefore your confidence which has great reward. Indeed, you need perseverance, so that, having done the will of God, you get what you promised*" (Heb. 10, 35-36).

From our Heavenly Mother, the Virgin Mary, I implore for you from her Son the grace necessary to accomplish the mission He has entrusted to you.

Thank you for the attention and good work.


+ Giovanni d'Aniello

Ap. Nuncio