



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE BOLLETTINO

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
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Audience with the Community of the Pontifical Regional Seminary of Sardinia

At midday today, in the Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the Community of the Pontifical Regional Seminary of Sardinia, on the occasion of the ninetieth anniversary of its founding.

The following is the text of the Pope's address to those present:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

Dear educators and students!

I welcome you on the occasion of the ninetieth anniversary of the foundation of the Pontifical Regional Seminary of Sardinia. It was Pope Pius XI who solicited the Italian bishops, especially from the centre-south and the islands, to agree on the concentration of the seminaries, in order to provide for the education of aspirants to the priesthood. In your Region the Seminary was first established in Cuglieri, together with the Theological Faculty; later it was transferred to the regional capital. I greet you all with affection, beginning with your Pastors, especially the archbishop of Cagliari, Msgr. Arrigo Miglio, whom I thank for his words.

On this occasion I would like to join you in praising the Lord, Who in these years has accompanied with His grace the life of the many priests formed in this important educational institution dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It has given the Church many committed ministers in your local Churches, in the mission *ad gentes* and in other services to the universal Church. May this commemoration give new impetus to the pastoral care of vocations, and to an up-to-date and careful formation of candidates for the sacred Order, for the benefit of God's people.

Dear seminarians, you are preparing to become, one day, workers in the harvest of the Lord, priests who know how to work together, even among different dioceses. This is particularly valuable for a region like Sardinia, steeped in faith and Christian religious traditions, and which, also due to its island nature, requires special care for the relations between the different diocesan communities. Today's material and spiritual poverty makes even more important what has always been required: namely, that pastors are attentive to the poor, and capable of being with them, with a simple lifestyle, so that the poor feel that our churches are first of all their home. I encourage you to prepare yourself now to become priests of the people and to the people, not dominators of the flock entrusted to you (cf. *1 Pt 5,3*), but servants. There is a great need for men of God who look to the essential, who lead a sober and transparent life, without nostalgia for the past but capable of looking forward according to the healthy tradition of the Church.

In these years of preparation for the ordained ministry, you are experiencing a special and unrepeatable moment in your life. May you be ever more aware of the grace the Lord has granted you by making resonate in you the invitation to leave everything and follow Him, to be with Him so as to be sent to preach (cf. *Mt 4: 19-20, Mk 3:14*). The hopes of the Church in Sardinia are placed in you, in a special way! Your bishops follow you with affection and concern, counting heavily on you and your resolve to conform to Jesus Good Shepherd for the good and holiness of the Christian communities of your region. Walk with joy, tenacity and seriousness in this journey of formation, to take on the form of apostolic life, which is able to respond to today's demands of evangelization.

The seminary, prior to and more than being an institution functional to the acquisition of theological and pastoral skills and a place of common life and study, is a genuine ecclesial experience, a singular community of missionary disciples, called to follow closely the Lord Jesus, to be with Him day and night, to share the mystery of His Cross and Resurrection, to be exposed to the Word and the Spirit, to verify and mature the specific traits of apostolic following. From now on, it is up to you to prepare yourselves adequately to be able to make a free and irrevocable choice of total fidelity to Christ, to His Church and to your vocation and mission.

The seminary is the school of this fidelity, which is learned first of all in prayer, especially in the liturgical one. At this time friendship with Jesus is cultivated, centred in the Eucharist and nourished by contemplation and the study of the Holy Scriptures. You can not exercise the ministry well if you do not live in union with Christ. Without Him we can do nothing (cf. *Jn 15: 5*).

In the journey of the seminary the role of formators is decisive: the quality of the presbytery depends largely on the commitment of those who are responsible for formation. They are called to work with rectitude and wisdom for the development of coherent and balanced personalities, capable of validly assuming, and then responsibly fulfilling, the priestly mission. In this delicate work of formation, your seminary also carries out an indispensable service to the dioceses, enhancing the quality of the formation of the clergy and communion among the Churches.

I entrust you all to the maternal protection of Our Lady of Bonaria. From experience I can tell you that time in the seminary is a privileged moment in which we experience this loving presence of Our Lady in our life. She always watches with thoughtful love on each one of you. She is your mother. Turn to Mary often and trustfully. I assure all of you of my prayer and my blessing. And please, I ask you to pray for me.
