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Audience of the Holy Father with the community of the Pontifical Spanish College of San José, Rome

At 12.25 this morning in the Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father received in audience the community of the Pontifical Spanish College of San José in Rome, on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of its founding.

The following is the address given by the Pope during the audience.

Holy Father's Address

Dear brothers and sisters,

I would like to extend my greetings to the entire community of the Pontifical Spanish College of San José and to thank Cardinal Ricardo Blázquez Pérez for the kind words he has addressed to me on behalf of everyone, at this commemoration. I thank God for the beautiful work initiated by blessed Manuel Domingo y Sol, founder of the Brotherhood of Diocesan Operative Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and for their work during all these years.

This institution was born with the vocation of being a reference point for the formation of the clergy. To form oneself means being able to approach the Lord with humility and to ask Him: "What is your will? What do you want of me? We know the answer, but perhaps it will do us good to recall it. I therefore propose the three words of the *Shema* with which Jesus responded to the Levite: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your *heart* and with all your *soul* ... and with all your *strength*" (Mk 12:30).

To love with all your heart means to do so without reserve and without bending, without spurious interests, without seeking one's own personal or career success. Pastoral charity means going out towards the other, understanding him, accepting him and forgiving him wholeheartedly. This is pastoral charity. But alone it is not possible to grow in that charity. That is why the Lord called us to be a community, so that this charity will bring

together all priests with a special bond in the ministry and fraternity. This requires the help of the Holy Spirit, but also personal spiritual combat (cf. *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, 87). This does not go out of fashion; it continues to be as relevant today as it was in the earliest times of the Church. It is an ongoing challenge to overcome individualism, to live diversity as a gift, striving for the unity of the presbytery, which is a sign of the presence of God in the life of the community. Indeed, a presbyter who does not maintain unity, is not a witness of God's presence. He sends Him away. In this way, gathered in the name of the Lord, especially when they celebrate the Eucharist, they manifest, also sacramentally, that he is the love of their heart.

Secondly, to love with all the soul is to be willing to offer life. This attitude must persist in time, and embrace our whole being. This was suggested by the Founder of the College: "I offer you my body, my soul, my memory, understanding, will, my health and even my life" (Writings III, vol. 6, doc. 111, p.1). Therefore, the formation of a priest can not only be academic, although this is very important and necessary, but must be a holistic process, encompassing all facets of life. Formation must help priests to grow and, at the same time, to approach God and brothers. Please, do not be satisfied with obtaining a degree; rather, be full-time disciples "to announce the Gospel message in a credible and understandable way to the man of today" (*Ratio*, 116). At this point, it is important to grow in the habit of discernment, which allows them to value every moment and motion, even that which seems in opposition and contradictory, and to sift out what comes from the Spirit; a grace that we should ask for on our knees. Only from this foundation, through the multiple tasks in the exercise of the ministry, will they be able to train others in that discernment that leads to Resurrection and Life, and allows them to give a conscious and generous response to God and to brothers (cf. Meeting with priests and consecrated persons - Milan, March 25, 2017). I said that the formation of a priest cannot be solely academic and conform to this alone. From this, there derive all the ideologies that plague the Church, of one type or another, of clerical academicism. Formation must have four pillars: academic formation, spiritual formation, community formation and apostolic formation. And the four must interact. If one of them is missing, formation begins to falter and the priest is paralyzed. So, please, the four of them together and interacting.

Finally, Jesus' third response, to love with all our strength, reminds us that where there is our treasure, there is our heart (cf. Mt 6:21), and that it is in our little things, our securities and affections, that we play at being able to say yes to the Lord or to turn our back on Him like the rich young man. We satisfy ourselves with an orderly and comfortable life that allows us to live without worry, without feeling the need to cultivate a spirit of poverty rooted in the Heart of Christ, Who, having been rich, became poor for our love (cf. 2 Cor. 8:9), or, as the text says, to enrich us. We are required to attain the true freedom of children of God, in an appropriate relationship with the world and with earthly goods, following the example of the Apostles, whom Jesus invites to trust in Providence and to follow Him without any loss or bondage (cf. Lk 9:57-62, Mk 10:17-22). Do not forget this: the devil always enters by the pocket, always. In addition, it is good to learn to give thanks for what we have, generously and voluntarily giving up that which is superfluous, so as to be closer to the poor and the weak. Blessed Domingo y Sol said that in order to satisfy need, one must be prepared to "sell one's shirt". I do not ask so much of you – shirtless priests, no! I ask simply that you be witnesses of Jesus, through simplicity and austerity of life, to become credible promoters of a true social justice (cf. John Paul II, *Pastores dabo vobis*, 30). And, please – and I say this as a brother, as a father, as a friend – please, shun ecclesiastical careerism: it is a scourge. Keep away from this.

Dear superiors, collegians and alumni of this Spanish College of San José: let us entrust your concerns and plans in the Holy Patriarch, Protector of the Church, so that he accompany you, together with Mary Most Holy, invoked by the tradition of the College as the Most Clement Mother, so that you may grow in wisdom and grace, and be beloved disciples of the Good Shepherd. May God bless you.
