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# Letter of the Holy Father Francis to the President of the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy on the new directions for the formation of priests, candidates to the diplomatic service of the Holy See

The following is the letter of Pope Francis dated 11 February this year, addressed to Bishop Joseph Marino, president of the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy, in which the Holy Father asks to incorporate in the training curriculum for priests who are candidates to the diplomatic service of the Holy See a year of missionary commitment to a diocese of the particular Churches, in order to train them in apostolic zeal to go to the border territories, outside their diocese of origin:

## Letter of the Holy Father

Dear brother,

At the conclusion of the work of the recent Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region, I expressed my wish that priests who prepare for the diplomatic service of the Holy See dedicate a year of their formation to missionary commitment in a diocese.

I am convinced that such experience may be useful to all young people who are preparing for or setting out for priestly service, but in a special way for those who in the future will be called to collaborate with the Pontifical Representations and who in turn may subsequently become envoys of the Holy See to the nations and to the particular Churches.

Indeed, as I have already had the opportunity to remind the community of the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy: “The mission to which you will be called one day to carry out will take you to all parts of the world. Europe is in need of an awakening; Africa is thirsty for reconciliation; Latin America is hungry for nourishment and interiority; North America is intent on rediscovering the roots of an identity that is not defined by exclusion; Asia and Oceania are challenged by the capacity to ferment in diaspora and to dialogue with the vastness of ancestral cultures” (25 June 2015).

In order to face positively these growing challenges for the Church and the world, future diplomats of the Holy See need to acquire, in addition to their solid priestly and pastoral formation, and the specific training offered by this Academy, a personal experience of mission outside their own diocese of origin, sharing with the missionary Churches a period of journey together with their community, participating in their daily evangelizing activity.

I therefore turn to you, dear Brother, who recently assumed the office of President of the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy, asking you to implement this desire of mine to enrich the curriculum of academic formation with a year dedicated entirely to missionary service in the particular Churches throughout the world. This new experience will come into effect starting with the new students who will begin their formation in the coming academic year 2020/2021.

In order to develop this project in greater depth and to get it off to a good start, close collaboration will be needed first of all with the Secretariat of State and, more precisely, with the Section for diplomatic staff of the Holy See, as well as with the Pontifical Representatives, who will certainly not fail to provide valuable help in identifying the particular Churches ready to welcome the students and in closely following their experience.

I am certain that, having overcome the initial concerns that might arise in the face of this new style of formation for future diplomats of the Holy See, the missionary experience that is to be promoted will be useful not only to young academics, but also to the individual Churches with which they will collaborate and, I hope, will inspire in other priests of the universal Church the desire to make themselves available for a period of missionary service outside their own diocese.

In conclusion, entrusting to the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, this new way of training future collaborators in the diplomatic service of the Holy See, I send with affection to you, dear Brother, and to the entire community of the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy, a cordial greeting and my Apostolic Blessing, asking you, please, to remember me in your prayers.

From the Vatican, 11 February 2020

FRANCIS