



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE RECENTLY APPOINTED LATIN AND EASTERN RITE BISHOPS
OF TERRITORIES UNDER THE JURISDICTION
OF THE CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS AND
THE CONGREGATION FOR THE ORIENTAL CHURCHES**

Friday, 17 September 2004

*Your Eminences,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,*

1. I welcome and greet all of you who are taking part in the updating session promoted by the Congregations for Bishops and for the Oriental Churches. I greet the Prefects of the two Dicasteries, Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re and Cardinal Moussa Daoud, who have fittingly gathered together the Pastors of the two great traditions of the universal Church, of the West and of the East.

As I thank Cardinal Re for his cordial words expressing your common sentiments, I would like to congratulate you, dear and venerable Brothers, who have accepted the invitation to live these days of deep episcopal brotherhood. Initiatives of this kind encourage communication and communion between the Churches and the episcopal body's harmonious concern for the Lord's flock, at whose service every Bishop is placed.

2. With his consecration, in fact, the Bishop fully becomes a *teacher, priest* and *guide* of the Christian community. Christ must therefore always be the heart of his ministry, the divine Teacher present both in the words of Scripture and in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

In the Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Gregis*, I wanted to recall that the Eucharist is at the heart of the "*munus sanctificandi*" of the Bishop (cf. n. 37). I keenly hope that the *Year of the Eucharist*, which will begin on 17 October with the closing of the International Eucharistic Congress, will be a

providential opportunity for examining more deeply the central importance of the Eucharistic Sacrament in the life and activity of every particular Church. It is round the altar that the bonds of fraternal love are strengthened and the awareness of all believers that they belong to the one People of God, whose Bishops are Pastors, is revived.

3. As Bishops it is your task to watch over the celebration of the sacraments and worship in general. Safeguard the expectations of the faithful to have a dignified celebration in which nothing is left to improvisation or chance. Indeed, the liturgy is the great school of Christian life where we worship, love and become acquainted with the Lord, where we are strengthened in our desire to follow the Teacher and in our determination to offer our own consistent witness.

You are, moreover, aware that the ministry of sanctification requires the witness of a holy life. The Spirit of God, who has made you holy through your episcopal consecration, expects of you a generous daily response. Your holiness is not merely personal, for its effects always prove beneficial to the faithful (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Gregis*, n. 11), and imbues you with that moral authority you need to exercise your ministry effectively. The witness of our lives must confirm what we teach.

4. Dear Brothers in the Episcopate, I exhort you to tend the flame of love for Christ at the altar each day, drawing from its heat the desire to give yourselves to God and to the Church.

May Mary, "Woman of the Eucharist", and the array of Apostles and holy Bishops sustain your steps and your ministry with their intercession.

With these sentiments, I impart my Blessing to you and gladly extend it to the communities entrusted to your pastoral care.