



Anno Sacerdotale

COMUNICATO STAMPA

9 giugno 2010

Sacerdoti oggi

Testimonianze e contributi artistici
Aula Paolo VI - 9 giugno 2010

CONCLUSION OF THE YEAR FOR PRIESTS

PRIESTS TODAY

4000 priests, deacons and seminarians

Paul VI Hall - Vatican - 9 June 2010

4000 priests, deacons and seminarians from 70 countries, together with a thousand religious men and women and lay people met together in the Paul VI Hall for an afternoon of witness and artistic contributions in one of the events marking the conclusion of the Year for Priests.

It was organised by the priests of the Focolare Movement and Schoenstatt in collaboration with Catholic Charismatic Renewal and other church organisations.

Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Secretary of State, brought “the greetings, the affection and blessing of the Holy Father Benedict XVI”, and he went on, “I recently spoke to the Pope about this meeting, which is set like a jewel in the initiatives for the conclusion of the Year for Priests, and he expressed his appreciation towards the ecclesial Movements that wanted this convention as a sign of unity and fraternity. Therefore, I have come to tell you that the Pope is particularly close to you.” “In reading the programme of your convention, I was able to perceive, through the different stages that compose it, the journey of a robust and generous priestly life, marked by a radical ‘communitarian form’ ... and I would like to highlight that the breath of communion is a fundamental element for the health of the body of the Church.”

At the end of the afternoon, the **Prefect of the Congregation for the clergy, Cardinal Claudio Hummes**, presided at Vespers and said, “during the preparation, we met often to look at all these events for the conclusion of the Year for Priests. The three movements came to us to speak about this afternoon. I was very happy, because I was convinced it would be a good thing for our priests, something that would rejuvenate us, renew us, give us the joy of being priests, of being priests at this time, in today’s world, in today’s culture.”

Neither the Secretary of State, nor the promoters of this event ignored the “painful burden” of the “serious infidelity of some members of the clergy”. It was however, from this “travail” this “persecution” within the church itself, (as Cardinal Bertone said, echoing the pope’s words) that “a providential raising of awareness” came about, a season of rebirth, a process of “renewal, conversion and purification, that leads us to walk confidently in the light”. A season that has already begun, “through the new springtime that the Holy Spirit is bringing about in our time, not least through the ecclesial movements and new communities.”

The purpose of the meeting was to show how the witness of faithfulness to the gospel and the life of communion among priests, fostered by the charisms in the church, particularly the “new”

charisms, can be a gift for all priests. This was demonstrated by both numerous testimonies and artistic contributions coordinated by the women of the Gen Verde music group. Particularly effective were the Rumanian Orthodox Choir, "Psalmody Transylvania" and the excerpts from *Ars Amoris* on the life of the Curé d'Ars.

The success of the event can be measured from the impressions of those who took part: "I am beginning to live my priesthood again with my initial enthusiasm but with the maturity of forty years experience." "Today I was given back the joy and courage of being a priest. I remade my choice of God."

The testimony of a group of seminarians from Burundi was very moving. They risked their lives to witness unity between Hutu and Tutsi in the midst of a conflict aimed at dividing them. Three of those who survived are now priests and they told how they forgave those who killed their companions. Individual testimonies spoke of the temptations to weakness in spiritual life. Brendan Purcell from Ireland told how when his celibacy was under threat, he experienced a new and more radical choice of God and a greater ability to love, and was able to embrace the pain that has afflicted the Irish Church. Some spoke of their fragility when burdened with heavy responsibilities often faced alone. This was the case for a priest from Germany, who conquered his alcoholism with the help of his community who then became corresponsable in mission. "I appreciated the courage shown by being open about problems and difficulties and showing the way out: being in God, living communion and fraternity."

A priest's life today was explained in three stages: Men of God, icons of Christ. Brothers among brothers in the one people. Prophets of a new world. To demonstrate the importance and usefulness of these ideas, experiences from Brazil and Germany spoke of the rebirth of the Christian community: how in a multiethnic context in Switzerland, hostility to welcoming and fraternity was overcome; and in Ascoli Piceno how the whole social fabric of the city was affected.

The reactions of lay people and especially young people present: "Today I saw the Church of tomorrow, the one that will accompany and nurture my children." "I am 23 and I am trying to understand my vocation. The worldwide vision and the unity of the Church that I saw penetrated my heart."

The programme, downloadable picture, TV transmissions and further information:
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