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OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLIS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 0103

Sabato 19.02.2011

Pubblicazione: Immediata

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◆ **UDIENZA ALLA COMUNITÀ DEL PONTIFICIO COLLEGIO FILIPPINO IN ROMA**

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Alle ore 12 di questa mattina, nella Sala Clementina del Palazzo Apostolico Vaticano, il Santo Padre Benedetto XVI riceve in Udienza la Comunità del Pontificio Collegio Filippino in Roma, in occasione del 50° anniversario di istituzione.

Pubblichiamo di seguito le parole che il Papa rivolge ai presenti:

● **PAROLE DEL SANTO PADRE**

Your Eminence,
Dear Brother Bishops and Priests,

I am pleased to greet you, the students and faculty of the Pontifical Filipino College in this year marking the fiftieth anniversary of its establishment by my predecessor Blessed John XXIII. I join you in giving thanks to God for all your College has contributed to the life of your fellow Filipinos both at home and abroad over the course of the last five decades.

As a house of formation located here, by the tombs of the great Apostles Peter and Paul, the Filipino College has fulfilled the mission entrusted to it in a variety of ways. Its first and most important task remains to assist students in their formation in the sacred sciences. This the College has accomplished well, as hundreds of priests have returned home with advanced degrees obtained from the various Pontifical universities and institutions in the city, and have gone on to serve the Church throughout the world, some of them with great distinction. Let me encourage you, the present generation of students at the College, to grow in faith, to strive for

excellence in your studies, and to grasp every opportunity afforded you to attain spiritual and theological maturity, so that you will be equipped, trained, and stout-hearted for whatever awaits you in the future.

As you know, a complete priestly formation includes not only the academic: over and above the intellectual component offered to them here, the students of the Filipino College are also formed spiritually through the Church of Rome's living history and the shining example of her martyrs, whose sacrifice configures them perfectly to the person of Jesus Christ himself. I am confident that each of you will be inspired by their union with the mystery of Christ and embrace the Lord's call to holiness which demands from you as priests nothing less than the complete gift of your lives and labors to God. Doing so in the company of other young priests and seminarians gathered here from throughout the world, you will return home, like those before you, with a grateful and permanent sense of the Church of Rome's history, of her roots in the paschal mystery of Christ, and of her wonderful universality.

While you are in Rome, pastoral necessity should not be overlooked and so it is right, even for priests in studies, to consider the needs of those around them, including the members of the Filipino community living in Rome and its environs. In doing so, let the use of your time always strike a healthy balance between local pastoral concerns and the academic requirements of your stay here, to the benefit of all.

Finally, do not forget the affection of the Pope for you and for your homeland. I urge you all to return to the Philippines with an unshakeable affection of your own for the Successor of Peter and with the desire to strengthen and maintain the communion which binds the Church in charity around him. In this way, having completed your studies, you will surely be a leaven of the Gospel in the life of your beloved nation.

Invoking the intercession of Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage, and as a pledge of grace and peace in the Lord, I willingly impart to all of you my Apostolic Blessing.

[00248-02.01] [Original text: English]

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