

From the Pope to the Priest

Beloved Priest Sons,

"By vocation you are the counsellors and spiritual guides of individual persons and of families. We now turn to you with confidence. Your first task—especially in the case of those who teach moral theology—is to expound the Church's teaching on marriage without ambiguity. Be the first to give, in the exercise of your ministry, the example of loyal internal and external obedience to the teaching authority of the Church. That obedience, as you know well obliges not only because of the reasons adduced, but rather because of the light of the Holy Spirit, which is given in a particular way to the Pastors of the Church in order that they may illustrate the truth (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 25).

You know, too, that it is of the utmost importance, for peace of consciences and for the unity of the Christian people, that in the field of morals as well as in that of dogma, all should attend to the Magisterium of the Church, and all should speak the same language. Hence, with all Our heart We renew to you the heartfelt plea of the great Apostle Paul: "I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment." (*1 Cor.*, 1,10)

To diminish in no way the saving teaching of Christ constitutes an eminent form of charity for souls. But this must ever be ac-

accompanied by patience and goodness, such as the Lord Himself gave example of in dealing with men. Having come not to condemn but to save (Jn., 3,17). He was indeed intransigent with evil, but merciful towards individuals.

In their difficulties, may married couples always find in the words and in the heart of a priest, the echo of the voice and the love of the Redeemer."

"We invoke the abundant graces of the God of holiness and mercy, and in pledge thereof We impart to you all Our Apostolic Blessing."

Given at Rome, from St. Peter's, this twenty-fifth day of July, Feast of St. James the Apostle, in the year nineteen hundred and sixty-eight, the sixth of Our Pontificate.

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