



Benedictus PP XVI
To Very Reverend Lawrence B. Terrien S.S.
Superior General of the Society of Priests of Saint-Sulpice

On the occasion of the four hundredth anniversary of the birth of Father Jean-Jacques Olier, founder of the Society of Priests of Saint-Sulpice, I join you, the members of the General Assembly meeting at the Seminary of Issy-les-Moulineaux, France, and the members of the whole Society in joy and thanksgiving.

To this day, this great personality of the French school of spirituality has known a spiritual influence which spreads not only to priests, but also to many lay people, religious men and women. Guided by Saint Vincent de Paul, Jean-Jacques Olier felt called by God to “the clergy of his Church, not for a career, but to radiate the true ‘priestly spirit’” and thus to work efficiently to the reformation of the Christian people. After his ordination to priesthood, he first concentrated on the preaching of popular missions in the country. Then, advised by Father de Condren, he would find new dynamics by accepting the willingness to “surrender to the Spirit”, and he would discover that his call was “to work at the reformation of the people by the formation of the clergy”. Afterwards, throughout his short life, he would have an intense apostolic activity as vicar of the parish of Saint-Sulpice in Paris, as seminary educator and as founder of the “little society” of his disciples, whilst developing in his writings profound and spiritual thinking.

In faithfulness to the intuitions of Father Olier, that were born from a rich personal experience and that show his concern to give life to “apostolic men”, I invite you to pursue with courage and self-abnegation your ministry serving the formation of future priests and the ongoing formation of pastors. The current changes in societies and the new conditions of priestly ministry require a renewal in the formation and in the spiritual accompanying of priests and candidates to priesthood. Therefore it is necessary to bear a special attention to the discernment of the authenticity of the candidates’ call and to pass on to them a solid education to the apostolic spirit and to the spiritual life, founded on the union to Christ, which will allow them to acquire a true internal unity. By letting yourself be guided by the Spirit of Christ, be yourselves men of faith and prayer, deeply engaged in the mission of the Church in order to develop in the future priests the apostolic and missionary spirit. May the charisma Jean-Jacques Olier has bequeathed to you be a source of joy and momentum to you all!

Trusting you to the intercession of the Virgin Mary “the prayerful and perfect servant”, I give you my affectionate apostolic Blessing and also to all the members of the Society of Priests of Saint-Sulpice and all the people who benefit from their apostolate, especially the priests and the seminarians.

From Vatican City, on June 9, 2008

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