



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

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Audience with the bishops, seminarians and formators of the Ecclesiastical Province of Valencia

Dear brothers in the episcopate,

*Dear seminarians and formators
of the Ecclesiastical Province of Valencia*

It is not easy to express to you my feeling, thinking of the Christmas festivities, undoubtedly atypical, with that experience that “God became mud” in you. A pain and a grief that, despite its harshness, opens us to hope, since by forcing us to hit rock bottom and leave behind everything that seemed to sustain us, it permits us to go beyond. It is not something we can do by ourselves; it is an immense darkness that you have experienced and are experiencing. And I think of the selfless help given by so many people, the eyes of the people full of dedication, capable of enlightening us with God’s tenderness.

It is in this field that you are required to work. The DANA is not an anomalous phenomenon that we simply hope does not repeat itself; it is the extrapolation of what is lived by every human being who must face a loss and who feels alone, disorientated and in need of solid support to be able to carry on. Jesus says it clearly: “Because the Lord has anointed me” – because you are anointed – “to bind up the brokenhearted ... to announce a year of favour from the Lord” (cf. *Is* 61:1; *Lk* 4:18). We are already in this Year of Grace, which I wanted to dedicate to hope, and which you will live in all its strength, contemplating these words.

At times I have said that “hope” is not “optimism”; “optimism” is a light expression, whereas hope is something else. We cannot take lightly people’s suffering and try to console them with convenient phrases and do-goodism. Our hope has a name, Jesus, that God who did not feel disgust at our mud and who, instead of saving us from the mud, became mud for us. And being a priest is being another Christ, it is making oneself mud in the weeping of the people, and when you see broken people, because in Valencia there are broken people, people whose lives have been broken into pieces, offer them pieces of yourselves, as Christ does in the Eucharist. Please, give of yourselves freely, because everything you have, you have received freely. And please, I ask you to pray for me. Thank you.

[Applause]

I was in Valencia once, at the time of “Rita”. What a great woman! I liked her a bit, but she was good.

[Apostolic blessing]
