

Pope greets new NAC seminarians; they respond with song

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CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy

Wearing new clerical suits, the 62 new students at the Pontifical North American College received a personal greeting from Pope Benedict XVI, to which they responded in song.

"Dear seminarians, use your time in Rome to conform yourselves more completely to Christ," the pope told the young men Aug. 26 after reciting the Angelus with them and hundreds of other visitors in the courtyard of the papal villa at Castel Gandolfo.

The 62 men -- who come from 46 U.S. dioceses, two Australian and one Canadian diocese -- sang "Ad Multos Annos" to Pope Benedict, wishing him "many years" in Latin, and the pope applauded in thanks.

The pope prayed that the seminarians and all Catholics would "remain faithful to the Lord, even when our faith in his teachings is tested."

The new students at the North American College, the seminary in Rome sponsored by the U.S. bishops, arrived at the college Aug. 23 for orientation. A total of 248 seminarians from 97 dioceses in the U.S., Canada and Australia are expected at the college this year.

In his main Angelus address, Pope Benedict commented on the Sunday Gospel reading about how some followers of Jesus abandoned him when they could not understand or accept his teachings.

The pope said Judas, who ended up betraying Jesus, should have been among those to leave, but he wasn't honest enough to do even that.

"He did not remain because of faith, or because of love, but with the secret intention of taking vengeance on the master," the pope said. Judas felt betrayed when Jesus made it clear he did not come to lead a political revolution.

"The problem is that Judas did not go away, and his most serious fault was falsehood, which is the mark of the devil," the pope said.

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