



(ZENIT, Vatican City, June 28, 2016).- Below is a ZENIT translation of Pope Francis' address to Benedict XVI for 65th Anniversary of Pope Emeritus' Priestly Ordination at the commemoration held today at noon in the Sala Clementina of the Apostolic Palace.

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Holiness,

Today we celebrate the history of a call that began sixty-five years ago with Your Priestly Ordination, which took place in the Cathedral of Freising on June 29, 1951. But what is the underlying note that runs through this long history and that from that first beginning up to today dominates it ever more?

In one of the many beautiful pages that you dedicate to the priesthood, you underscore how, at the hour of Simon's definitive call, Jesus, looking at him, basically asks him only one thing: "Do you love me?" How beautiful and true this is! Because it is here, you tell us, it is in that "do you love me," that the Lord founded the feeding, because only if there is love for the Lord can He feed through us: "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you" (*John 21:15-19*). This is the note that dominates a whole life spent in priestly service and true theology that you have not accidentally described as "the search for the Beloved"; it is this that you have always witnessed and still witness today: that the decisive thing in our day - of sun or rain - that alone with which all the rest comes, is that the Lord be truly present, that we desire Him, that we be close to Him interiorly, that we love Him, that we truly believe profoundly in Him and believing that we truly love Him. It is this loving that truly fills our heart, this believing is what makes us walk safely and calmly on the waters, even in the midst of a storm, in fact as happened to Peter; this loving and this believing is what enables us to look to the future, not with fear and nostalgia, but with gladness, also in the now advanced years of our life.

And so, precisely by living and witnessing today, in such an intense and luminous way, this only truly decisive thing – to have our gaze and heart turned to God – you, Holiness, continue to serve the Church, do not cease to truly contribute with vigor and wisdom to her growth; and you do so from that small *Mater Ecclesiae* Convent in the Vatican, which reveals itself to be altogether something other than one of those forgotten corners in which the disposable culture of today tends to relegate individuals when, with age, their strength fails. It is altogether the opposite; and allow your Successor to say this forcefully, who chose to call himself Francis! Because Saint Francis' spiritual journey began at San Damiano, but the true place he loved, the beating heart of the Order, there where he founded it and where finally he rendered his life to God was the Porziuncola, the “small portion,” the little corner near the Mother of the Church; near Mary that, because of her very firm faith and her living so entirely of love and in love with the Lord, all generations call Blessed. Thus, Providence willed that you, dear Brother arrive in a place so to speak precisely “Franciscan” from which emanates a tranquillity, a peace, a strength, a trust, a maturity, a faith, a dedication and a fidelity that do me so much good and give strength to me and to the whole Church.

The wish with which I desire to conclude is therefore a wish that I address to you and together with all of us and with the entire Church: that you, Holiness, be able to continue feeling the hand of the merciful God that supports you, that you be able to experience and witness to us the love of God; that, with Peter and Paul, you be able to continue to exult with great joy while you journey toward the goal of the faith (cf. 1 *Peter* 8-9; 2 *Timothy* 4)!

[Original text: Italian] [Translation by ZENIT]