

Pope lauds North American College on its 150th anniversary

VATICAN CITY - Pope Benedict XVI marked the 150th anniversary of the Pontifical North American College, and said the seminary deserves thanks for “training generations of worthy preachers of the Gospel and ministers of the sacraments.”

The pope met at the Vatican Jan. 9 with the institution’s students, superiors, faculty and alumni. The college, the U.S. national seminary in Rome, was concluding a reunion and other events to commemorate the anniversary of its founding in 1859.

The reunion participants included Archbishop Edwin F. O’Brien, who served as rector of the Pontifical North American College from 1990 to 1994.

The pope said he was confident the college would continue to produce “wise and generous pastors capable of transmitting the Catholic faith in its integrity, bringing Christ’s infinite mercy to the weak and the lost, and enabling America’s Catholics to be a leaven of the Gospel in the social, political and cultural life of their nation.”

Repeating a point he made during his visit in 2008 to the United States, the pope said the church in America is “called to cultivate an intellectual culture which is genuinely Catholic, confident in the profound harmony of faith and reason, and prepared to bring the richness of faith’s vision to bear on the pressing issues which affect the future of American society.”

He said the Pontifical North American College was “uniquely prepared to help meet this perennial challenge.”

“In the century and a half since its foundation, the college has offered its students an exceptional experience of the universality of the church, the breadth of her intellectual and spiritual tradition, and the urgency of her mandate to bring Christ’s saving truth to the men and women of every time and place,” he said.

Pope Pius IX inaugurated the college on Dec. 8, 1859, having donated the site on Via dell’Umiltà in downtown Rome. In 1953, the college moved to a larger new facility

on the Janiculum Hill, not far from the Vatican.