



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE GENERAL CHAPTER
OF THE OBLATES OF SAINT JOSEPH**

*Consistory Hall
Friday, 31 August 2018*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers, Good morning!

I like Saint Joseph, he emanates so much “power”! For over 40 years I have recited a prayer that I found in an old French missal that says of Saint Joseph: “... *dont la puissance sait rendre possibles les choses impossibles*” [“whose power makes impossible things possible”]. The power of Saint Joseph. He never, never said ‘no’. We must take courage from this. I am pleased to meet you on the occasion of your General Chapter and I offer you my cordial welcome. I address a particular thought to Fr Jan Pelczarski, recently elected Superior General, offering him and his Counsellors my best wishes for their new mandate. At the same time, I express my appreciation to Fr Michele Piscopo for his generous service at the helm of the Congregation. Thank you. Best wishes! I extend my warm sentiments to the entire religious Family that you, Chapter Fathers, represent here, as I encourage everyone to persevere in his respective apostolic sphere.

The General Chapter of an Institute of Consecrated Life is a special moment of grace, certainly for its members and for its communities, but also apart from them, for many ecclesial organizations, parishes, families, lay groups connected in various ways. The mission passed on to you by your Founder, Saint Joseph Marelli, highlights your particular charism of reproposing in life and in the apostolate the ideal of service as Saint Joseph of Nazareth lived it. Starting by following his discrete, humble and hardworking example. He lived his vocation of safeguarding Mary and Jesus with fidelity and simplicity. He was close to his bride in joyous and difficult moments, and he established with her a wonderful intimacy with Jesus, whom he kept constantly under his gaze.

Enriched by the industrious simplicity of Saint Joseph, you are called to be witnesses in the world to a distinctive message, to a comforting good news: which is that God makes use of everyone, with a preference for the least and the humanly ill-equipped, in order to sow and cultivate his Kingdom. May the prospect of serving Jesus in the Church and in brothers and sisters, with particular attention to young people and to the humblest, always shape your life and your joy. In this way may you be inspired by your holy Founder's words, which are always of great relevance: "Poor Oblates of the Home for the Aged, you are among the minor priests. You are nothing and you enjoy none of those positions that hold promise for the future. And yet Our Lord makes use of you also for the good of souls. Yes, keep on saying: *Servi inutiles sumus* ['we are unprofitable servants'], but keep on going forward to do the portion of work which the Divine Will assigns to you day by day through its representatives. And may others *videant opera vestra bona et glorificent Patrem vestrum qui in coelis est* ['see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven']" (*The Letters of Saint Joseph Marelli*, Lett. 212, p. 126).

Thus, I encourage you to continue to live and work in the Church and in the world with the simple and essential virtues of the Bridegroom of the Virgin Mary: humility, which attracts the benevolence of the Father; intimacy with the Lord who sanctifies all Christian action; silence and hiddenness, together with zeal and hard work to further the Lord's will, in the spirit of that happy phrase which Marelli consigned to you as a motto and a programme: "Be Carthusians indoors, and apostles outdoors". This teaching, always alive in your spirit, obliges all of you, dear brothers, to safeguard in the religious houses a climate of meditation and prayer, fostered by silence and by timely community encounters. The family spirit strengthens the union of communities and of the whole Congregation.

Saint Joseph Marelli exhorted his spiritual sons to put in first place love and obedience to the teachings and directives of the Supreme Pontiff. Those were times of rationalism intolerant of all spiritual dogma; ours are times of unbridled relativism which undermines the edifice of faith and strips away the meaning of the very idea of Christian fidelity. Therefore your Founder's mandate — to be witnesses everywhere to love and fidelity to Christ and to his Church — is more timely than ever. With your life and your words you teach the people of every part of the world and in particular young people, to whom your apostolate is largely directed, that the example of Joseph of Nazareth, fully consecrated to the service of Jesus, is still the simplest, safest and most fascinating way to accomplish the Christian vocation and life in a full and joyful way.

Confronted by a superficial culture which reveres the possession of material goods and promises happiness through dangerous shortcuts, you do not fail to encourage young people to temper the spirit and to form a mature character, capable of strength but also of tenderness. And the greatest joy is speaking to young people about Jesus, reading the Gospel with them, correlating it with life.... This is the best path for building a solid future.

May the intercession of the two Josephs, the Patron of the universal Church, and your Founder,

render fruitful the work of the Chapter. May it support the mission of the Marellian Family: men and women Oblates, groups and lay people who share your spirituality. I bless you all wholeheartedly, and I ask you to please pray for me.