



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II TO MEMBERS OF « SERRA INTERNATIONAL » MOVEMENT

Monday, 4 July 1983

Dear Friends,

It is a great pleasure for me to greet you, the members of Serra International, who have come to Rome for your annual convention. I extend to each of you a very warm welcome and I am happy to have the occasion to encourage the works of your distinguished lay apostolate.

1. In the almost fifty years since its foundation, Serra International has striven to remain faithful to the call given to all lay people in the Church, the call to be sharers in the mission of Christ, "Priest, Prophet and King" and thus "to have an active part to play in the life and action of the Church" (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 10).

Furthermore through the grace of baptism and confirmation, Serrans are drawn to accept the vocation common to all Christians, that of following the path to genuine holiness. "For this is the will of God: your sanctification" (1 *Thess.* 4, 3), Saint Paul tells us. We are called to be transformed into the glorious image of Christ himself (Cfr. 2 *Cor.* 3, 18).

2. By choosing as your Patron the great missionary, Father Junipero Serra, you express well a fundamental aim of your organization: the desire to bear witness in a special way to the working of God's grace in your lives. The desire to be apostles for our times-just as Father Serra bore witness to Christ among the Indians in the eighteenth century-impels you as members of Serra *to promote Catholic life*, not only within your own families, but also among your peers in the business and professional world, offering to them through your personal lives of Christian virtue a concrete testimony to the love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ.

You find support and encouragement for this task in your regular meetings, which strengthen the

bonds of friendship among you and nurture the ideals which bring you together.

3. Still further-and more specific to your pursuits as a world-wide body - is the Serran objective of *promoting vocations to the ministerial priesthood and fostering respect for it, as well as for all religious vocations in the Church*. The realization of this goal has been the principal focus of the programmes and projects of Serra International throughout the years. It has given impetus to the apostolic thrust of Serra Clubs round the world.

Especially praiseworthy is the *primacy* you have given *to prayer* for vocations. Through your frequent participation in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, you find not only a deep source of spiritual strength, but also the most effective means of imploring God's grace to touch the hearts of young men and women, so that the seeds of vocations in the Church may take root and grow strong.

4. I need not dwell at length on the challenges - indeed the difficulties - of fostering and promoting vocations to the priesthood and religious life in our day. As Christians dedicated to supporting these vocations, in direct and indirect ways, you easily understand just how much must be done.

I would ask you to continue to perform this valuable service to the Church *in collaboration with your local Bishops*.

As the chief pastors of their Dioceses, one of the first duties of your Bishops is to be concerned that there is always a sufficient number of ecclesiastical vocations to attend to the spiritual needs of God's people. In fulfilling this duty, however, the Bishops are well aware that they cannot work alone. They must draw together all the forces of their individual Dioceses into a unified effort. They will depend upon the cooperation and assistance of their brother priests, whose interest in this matter should always be outstanding; but they must also solicit the help of those who share in the common priesthood of believers and as such participate in the salvific mission of the Church in their own special way. The bishops know that lay people, precisely because they are conformed to the image of Christ at Baptism have the right and duty to labour actively at building up the Body of Christ.

It is for this reason that your Bishops are eager to accept *your collaboration* in such an important *ecclesial activity*. This is why they welcome your *support in prayer*, so that the efforts made in this regard may bear fruit and that their effects may endure.

I invite you then, my brothers of Serra International, to *look to your Bishops* for guidance and direction *in pursuing the Serran ideals*, since it is from them that the impulse and inspirations for the apostolate in your Dioceses derive. *Offer the Bishops whatever assistance* is possible in order to encourage young people to accept the call to service in the priesthood and religious life, for it is the Bishops who stand first among those who are called to serve God and his people.

And, above all, never lose heart. Have *immense confidence* in the power of Christ's Paschal Mystery to *raise up new vocations* to the priesthood and religious life, despite the difficulties and obstacles of this or any age.

5. As you pursue this apostolic endeavour, I assure you of my prayers for its success, and I commend you to the maternal care of Mary, the Queen of the Apostles, who remains forever the perfect model for those who seek to be united with her Son and to cooperate in his saving work for all humanity.

In the love of Christ our Redeemer, I impart to you my Apostolic Blessing, which I very willingly extend to your families and loved ones at home.

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