



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE CONGREGATION OF THE DEVOUT VIRGINS
OF ST CATHERINE, VIRGIN AND MARTYR**

Thursday, 12 December 2002

Dear Sisters,

1. With a cordial greeting, I welcome all of you to the Apostolic Palace. I am happy to join you in your rejoicing over the 400th anniversary of papal approval of the *Congregation of the Devout Virgins of St Catherine, Virgin and Martyr*, and the 450th anniversary of your foundress's birth.

This double anniversary invites us, in faithfulness to the charism of Bl. Regina Protmann, to renew your dedication to the mission you have inherited, to bring God's love to all who are seeking and suffering.

2. The spirituality of a religious community must be inspired by the founding charism, challenged and measured by it. Regina Protmann was born in Braunsberg im Ermland at the time of the Reformation. She herself lived the spirit of authentic religious reform in following Christ. She visited the poor, the sick and children to bring to them the witness of the divine goodness. She held it to be her sacred duty to comfort the afflicted and nurse the sick (cf. Mt 25,35 ff.) and to give children a good education.

3. Closely connected to this service of love, Bl. Regina Protmann's main concern was her living relationship with Jesus, her Lord and Spouse. "She prayed in the truth and without ceasing" her biographer says. Prayer prepares the ground for action. "By opening our heart to the love of God it also opens it to the love of our brothers and sisters, and makes us capable of shaping history according to God's plan" (*Novo Millennio ineunte*, n. 33).

4. Dear Sisters! As daughters of Mother Regina you are called to love Christ in the poor. The Rule

(of 1602) urges you to "serve Christ, Lord and Spouse with diligence, according to his divine counsel" (art. 1). This readiness to serve is a sequel to the adoration of Christ in daily life.

"Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts". Peter says: "Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope" (I Pt 3,15). Thus you will truly be able to bring the Saviour to humanity.

Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and Martyr, Catherine, of Bl. Mother Regina and of all the saints, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to you, dear Sisters, and to all who are entrusted to your care.