



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE SUPERIOR GENERAL OF THE MISSIONARY
SISTERS OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS**

*To the Reverend Mother Sr Lina Colombini
Superior General of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*

1. On the occasion of this institute's forthcoming General Chapter, I am pleased to send you and the chapter sisters my best wishes and greetings, and the assurance of my spiritual closeness, witnessed by a special prayer to the Lord that your work may be fruitful.

This first ordinary Chapter of the new millennium is a privileged moment of grace for the Cabrini family, called to accept Jesus' invitation to Peter and his first companions to "put out into the deep and let your nets down" (cf. Lk 5,4). I repeated this invitation to all the Church in the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte*.

"Put out into the deep! The Lord's words prompt us to remember the past with gratitude, to live the present with enthusiasm and to open ourselves confidently to the future: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and for ever" (Heb 13,8)" (*ibid.*, 1). The Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus enters the third millennium enriched not only with the extraordinary experience of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, but also with the fruits gathered during the celebrations for the 150th anniversary of the birth of your foundress, St Frances Xavier Cabrini, as well as those for the 50th anniversary of her proclamation as Patroness of migrants.

2. The theme you have chosen for your Chapter: *"Put out into the deep and let your nets down"* (cf. Lk 5,4). *Challenges and prophecy of the Cabrini family*", fits into this context and invites generous apostolic enthusiasm at the beginning of a century that abounds in challenges, often unheard of, but is also always penetrated by God's watchful and active presence. In this regard, your Constitutions recall that *"the vocation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart is a commitment to spread that fire which Jesus came to bring to the earth"* (Constitutions, 15).

This is what Frances Cabrini did courageously throughout her life, which she dedicated to bringing Christ's love to all those, far from their homeland and family, who risked drifting apart from God as well. She would often repeat to her daughters: "*Let us imitate the charity of the adorable Heart of Jesus in the salvation of souls, let us make ourselves everything to everyone to win them all for Jesus, as he himself continues to do*", and again: "*O Jesus, if only I could open my arms wide and embrace the whole world to give it to you. Oh! How happy I should be!*".

If they intend to follow in the foundress' footsteps, her spiritual Daughters cannot but forge ahead with new ardour on the boundaries of charity, to make the Lord's merciful and compassionate love visible and the announcement of Christ ring out wherever Providence sends them to work.

3. As they face the changing conditions of human mobility, Mother Cabrini's religious are called to offer an attentive welcome and solidarity to the migrants of our time, who often bring with them, in addition to a burden of suffering, loneliness and poverty, a wealth of humanity, values and hopes.

At the same time they feel committed to devoting special care to the advancement of women, particularly in the contexts where they are most at risk and defenceless. Educating children and adolescents, catechesis and the pastoral care of youth continue to be their principal means of evangelization and Christian formation, channels for passing on a faith which has a profound effect on culture and on life.

Sustained by the words of the Lord who invites them to "put out into the deep" and contemplating the example of their foundress, the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus will devote themselves with zeal and enthusiasm to the harvests that the Lord entrusts to them. Despite the social context which is often distressing, they will not cease to witness to God's primacy and to spread through their words and their life the joy of their own consecration to Christ, chaste, poor and obedient.

This presupposes a clear awareness that their priority commitment must be the daily effort of Christian asceticism, at both the personal and community levels, in order to be configured to Christ, as Mother Cabrini wrote: "*taking Jesus as your model in all events and in all your actions, falling into step with him, to walk only on his path of love*".

4. I am confident that the desire to be faithful to its mission and its founding charism will lead this institute always to cherish the incalculable value of community life. It is especially important to build fraternal communities whose principal means of evangelization is their own life witness. May the houses in which the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus live be true schools of formation and of human and spiritual growth, where love of God is expressed in service and in charity, in reciprocal forgiveness. This way of life will be an eloquent echo of the Good News for everyone and an effective vocational proposal, which will not fail to motivate young women to think seriously about the consecrated life.

Another important commitment for the Institute will be to persevere in the process of communion and in sharing its own charism with lay people, to face today's challenges together. The desire to be faithful to the founding charism, keeping alive the superior requirements of the Kingdom of God, cannot but spur every member and every community to set out on the demanding journey of continuing formation with constant attention to the modern challenges and to the signs of the times.

5. Reverend Mother, may the Lord guide the Chapter's work with the power of his Spirit, so that it may bring your entire religious family the hoped-for spiritual and apostolic fruits.

As I invoke upon you the motherly protection of Blessed Mary, Our Lady of Grace, whom St Frances Xavier Cabrini pointed out as Mother and Teacher to her daughters, I encourage you in your mission, Reverend Mother, and I impart a special Apostolic Blessing to you with affection, as a pledge of abundant graces and spiritual joy.

From the Vatican, 24 June 2002.

JOHN PAUL II