



The Holy See

BENEDICT XVI

REGINA CÆLI

St Peter's Square

Fourth Sunday of Easter, 13 April 2008

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The World Day of Prayer for Vocations is celebrated on this Fourth Sunday of Easter, on which the Liturgy presents to us Jesus as the Good Shepherd. On every continent Ecclesial Communities with one voice seek from the Lord numerous holy vocations to the priesthood, to the consecrated and missionary life and to Christian marriage as they meditate on the theme: "*Vocations at the service of the Church-mission*". This year the World Day of Prayer for Vocations fits into the setting of the Pauline Year which will begin this 28 June to celebrate the bimillennium of the birth of the Apostle Paul, the missionary par excellence.

In the experience of the Apostle to the Gentiles, whom the Lord called to be a "minister of the Gospel", vocation and mission are inseparable. He therefore represents a model for every Christian, particularly for missionaries *ad vitam*, in other words, those men and women who dedicate themselves totally to proclaiming Christ to those who still do not know him, a vocation which has retained its full value. This missionary service is carried out in the first place by priests who dispense the Word of God and the sacraments and who manifest the healing presence of Jesus Christ to all, especially the sick, the lowly and the poor through their charitable Apostolate. Let us thank God for these brothers of ours who spend themselves unreservedly in the pastoral ministry, sometimes sealing their fidelity to Christ with the sacrifice of their lives, as happened yesterday to two Religious killed respectively in Guinea and Kenya. Our grateful admiration and prayers of suffrage go to them. Let us pray that the ranks of those who decide to live the Gospel radically with the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience may be ever more numerous. They are men and women who have a primary role in evangelization. Some of them are dedicated to contemplation and prayer, others to a multi-faceted educational and charitable action, but they all

have the same goal in common: to witness to God's primacy over everything and to spread his Kingdom in every social milieu. Many of them, the Servant of God Paul VI wrote, "are enterprising and their apostolate is often marked by an originality, by a genius that demands admiration. They are generous: often they are found at the outposts of the mission, and they take the greatest of risks for their health and their very lives" (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *[Evangelii Nuntiandi](#)*, n. 69). Finally, it should not be forgotten that the vocation to Christian marriage is a missionary vocation: indeed, the spouses are called to live the Gospel in families, in work contexts, in parish and in civil communities. In some cases they also offer their valuable collaboration to the mission *ad gentes*.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us invoke Mary's motherly protection upon the multiple vocations that exist in the Church so that they may develop a strong missionary stamp. I also entrust to her, Mother of the Church and Queen of Peace, the special missionary experience which I shall be living in the next few days with my [Apostolic Visit to the United States of America](#) and my Visit to the United Nations Organization, while I ask you all to accompany me with your prayers.

After the Regina Caeli:

I greet all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors here today. This Tuesday I leave Rome for my Visit to the United Nations Organization and the United States of America. With the various groups I shall meet, my intention is to share Our Lord's word of life. In Christ is our hope! Christ is the foundation of our hope for peace, for justice, and for the freedom that flows from God's law fulfilled in his commandment to love one another.

Dear brothers and sisters, I ask you all to pray for the success of my Visit, so that it may be a time of spiritual renewal for all Americans. Upon each of you present, I invoke the protection and guidance of Jesus the Good Shepherd.

I wish you all a good Sunday!

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