



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE NATIONAL DIRECTORS OF THE
PONTIFICAL MISSION SOCIETIES***

Monday, 8 May 2006

*Your Eminence,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Presbyterate,
Dear National Directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies,*

I address my warm greeting to each one of you, with a special thought for Cardinal Crescenzo Sepe - I am grateful for his words on your behalf - and for Mons. Henryk Hoser, President of The Pontifical Mission Societies. Welcome to this meeting, which is taking place on the occasion of the Annual Ordinary General Assembly of your Superior Council.

Your presence witnesses to the Church's missionary commitment on the various continents, and the "Papal" character that marks your Association emphasizes the special ties that bind you to the See of Peter. I know that after an intense effort of "updating", you have completed the draft of your new Statutes and obtained their approval. I hope that they will contribute to offering broader prospects to the task of missionary animation and assistance to the Church in which you are involved.

At your General Assembly you intend to reflect on the missionary mandate that Jesus entrusted to his disciples. This urgent pastoral need is felt by all the local Churches, mindful of the words of the Second Vatican Council, that missionary commitment is essential to the Christian community.

By placing themselves at the service of evangelization, the Pontifical Mission Societies, since their establishment in the 19th century, have pointed out that missionary action consists ultimately in communicating God's love to the brothers and sisters as it is revealed in the plan of salvation. Knowing and accepting this saving Love is indeed fundamental for our lives - I wrote in the Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* - and gives rise to crucial questions about who God is and who we are

(cf. n. 2).

Through interventions of effective and generous charity, the Societies of the Propagation of the Faith, of St Peter the Apostle and of the Holy Childhood have spread the proclamation of the Good News and helped to found and to consolidate the Churches in new territories.

The Missionary Union for the Clergy has encouraged the clergy and Religious to pay increased attention to evangelization.

All this has inspired in the Christian people a reawakening of faith and love, combined with great missionary enthusiasm.

Dear friends of the Pontifical Mission Societies, thanks also to the missionary animation you carry out in parishes and Dioceses, prayers and material support for the missions are today regarded as an integral part of every Christian's life.

Just as the early Church sent the "aid" collected in Macedonia and Achaia to Jerusalem for the Christians of that Church (cf. Rom 15: 25-27), so today a responsible spirit of sharing and communion involves the faithful of every community in supporting the needs of the mission lands.

Your Statutes, highlighting that the mission, God's work in history, is not a mere instrument but an event that puts everyone at the disposal of the Gospel and of the Spirit (cf. art. 1), encourage you to work to enable Christians to grow in the knowledge that missionary commitment involves them in the spiritual dynamic of Baptism, gathering them together in communion around Christ to participate in his mission (cf. *ibid.*).

This intense missionary dynamic that involves Ecclesial Communities and individual members of the faithful has developed in recent years into a promising missionary cooperation.

You are important witnesses of it, because everywhere you help to nourish that universal missionary spirit which was the badge of your birth as Mission Societies and has been the strength of your development.

Continue to carry out this precious service to the Ecclesial Communities, encouraging their reciprocal cooperation. Harmony of intentions and the hoped-for unity of evangelizing action grow to the extent that the reference of every activity is God who is Love and the pierced Heart of Christ in which this love is supremely expressed (cf. *Deus Caritas Est*, n. 12).

In this way, dear friends, none of your actions will ever be reduced to mere organizational efficiency or linked to individual interests of any kind, but will always be revealed as a manifestation of divine Love.

Moreover, the fact that you come from different Dioceses makes it even clearer that the Pontifical Mission Societies, "Although they are the Societies of the Pope... belong to all the Bishops and to the entire People of God" (*Cooperatio Missionalis*, n. 4).

Dear National Directors, I address my thanks to you especially, for all you do to meet the needs of evangelization. May your commitment be an incentive to all who benefit from your aid to accept the invaluable gift of salvation and to open their hearts to Christ, the one Redeemer.

With these sentiments, as I invoke the motherly assistance of Mary, Queen of the Apostles, I impart a special Apostolic Blessing to you who are present here and to the particular Churches you represent.

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