



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE SISTERS OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST
AND ST CATHERINE OF SIENA**

To Reverend Mother Maria Floriana Pasqualetto

Superior General of the Congregation of the Sisters of St John the Baptist and St Catherine of Siena

1. I learned with deep pleasure that the Congregation of the Sisters of St John the Baptist and St Catherine of Siena is holding its General Chapter in July on the theme: *"From the structure, a new vitality of the Institute for the good of the Church and of society, in the present and in the future"*. This important event gives me the happy opportunity to express my spiritual closeness to your Institute and to address a cordial word of good wishes to you and to the sisters elected for the Capitular Assembly. During this meeting, you will reflect on how to open your congregation to new prospects for spiritual and apostolic development.

To do this, continuing on the path you have taken so far, you want to return to the origin of the institute to revisit what you like to call its "structure", that is, the Rule and the Constitutions. You are rightly convinced that the original inspiration of Medea Ghiglino Patellani, who dedicated herself to the integral education of youth in Genoa at the end of the 16th century is still valid today. Thus, from the consideration of your original starting point, you want to draw an inner incentive to set out towards courageous new missionary goals. In this regard I am thinking of your plans for the two Provinces of Italy and Brazil, likewise your family's recent opening to Albania and Bolivia.

2. Young Medea, in her deep attachment to her city, put the new foundation under the protection of St John the Baptist, Patron of Genoa, and St Catherine of Siena: John who points out Jesus, the Lamb of God, and Catherine, an apostolic woman filled with prophetic love for Christ and for the Church. She constantly referred to these two great saints, in whom she saw totally fulfilled her desire to belong to Christ without reserve, and they accompanied the institute in its later development.

Under the expert guidance of the Jesuit, Fr Bernardino Zanoni, the foundress set herself to express in daily life the great "lesson" of the *Exercises* of St Ignatius of Loyola, constantly seeking a wise balance between personal spiritual experience and the demands of community life. Since then, *communion lived to the full and the education of young people*, with the consciousness of the globality of the human person, have been the heart of your charism.

I am sure that, thanks to the attentive *rereading of your history*, your General Chapter will be a favourable time for the whole family of the Sisters of St John the Baptist and St Catherine of Siena to take a further step forward, adapting the original Rule of Life to the changed needs of our time, without losing any of its substance.

3. Above all, you should be careful to safeguard "*communion*", the central element and synthesis of your charism. The foundress laid down dedication to communion at the beginning of the Rule: "*They are to live in common, in everything*" (art. 1, RP). The word "*everything*", emphasizes the person's generous belonging to the religious community. At the same time, they mean that activities must never be the result of individual choices but must witness to the breadth of a constant community understanding.

This specific feature of your charism clearly corresponds to one of the priorities of the new evangelization which I pointed out in my Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio ineunte*: that is, "to make the Church the home and school of communion" (n. 43). I wrote in this vein: "Before making practical plans, we need to promote a spirituality of communion, making it the guiding principle of education" (*ibid.*). It is true: *apostolic service, in which God's glory shines forth, is born of really lived communion*.

This regard for communion can guide the Institute's members as they update the Constitutions, with attentive discernment and constant reference to the will of the Foundress who was motivated by her desire to collaborate with "the Holy Work of the Greatest Glory of God, which consists in the particular and universal good of the souls redeemed by the Precious Blood of Jesus".

To love God and the Church: this ideal of Medea Ghigliino Patellani will inspire her spiritual daughters in their educational service, ceaselessly recalling the fundamental pedagogical principle: the unity of the human person. Thus, faithful to the original charism and docile to the action of the Holy Spirit, they will be able to respond to the challenges of this moment in history with missionary choices that are open to the "signs of the times".

4. Reverend Mother, while I thank the Lord for the *generous work that this congregation carries out in the Church and in society*, I ask you to make the General Chapter a providential opportunity for a vast relaunching, and, despite all the current problems, persevering on the path you have begun with full confidence in divine Providence.

May Mary, Star of the New Evangelization accompany you, Reverend Mother, and all the sisters, and, from her divine Son, obtain for each one the graces she needs. With these sentiments, as I implore an abundance of heavenly gifts upon the work of the Chapter, I cordially impart to you, to the Chapter Sisters and to the entire Congregation my Apostolic Blessing.

From Castel Gandolfo, 11 July 2002.

JOHN PAUL II

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