



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO THE CONGREGATION OF ST JOSEPH

Friday, 1 December 1978

Beloved Sons!

Gathered in Rome for your annual Organizational Meeting, which this time coincides with the 150th anniversary of the birth of the Founder of your Institute, St Leonard Murialdo, you expressed the desire to meet the new Pope, in order to manifest your faithfulness to the Vicar of Christ and to have some words from him.

Expressing to you my gratitude for this thoughtful and kind gesture, in the first place I extend my most cordial greeting to each of you and willingly join in this celebration of yours, trusting that it will be a stimulus to renewed commitment in your spiritual life and in your apostolic zeal.

I wish, furthermore, to take advantage of the meeting to exhort you to remain faithful to three instructions of your Founder:

1. The pursuit of holiness. "Make yourselves holy and do so quickly" was Murialdo's constant exhortation. This must be our first concern and our fundamental commitment.

Holiness consists first of all in living the reality of God's love with conviction, in spite of the difficulties of history and of one's own life.

Murialdo wrote in his "Spiritual Testament": "I would like the Congregation of St Joseph to aim above all at spreading around it and especially within it knowledge of the infinite, actual and individual love that God has for all souls, especially of the faithful, and particularly for his elect and chosen—priests and religious—of the personal love he has for each of us. We read in books of piety, we preach from the pulpit that God loved men so much, but people do not reflect that it is now, at present, in this very hour, that God loves us truly and infinitely ...".

I, too, wish to say this to you all: in your daily difficulties, in moments of trials and discouragement, when it seems that every commitment is almost emptied of interest and value, remember that God knows our troubles! God loves you, one by one, he is close to you, he understands you! Trust in him and in this certainty find the courage and the joy to carry out your duty lovingly and joyfully.

"Holiness" also consists in a life of concealment and humility: to know how to immerse oneself in the daily suffering of men, but in silence, without publicity, without worldly echoes. "Let us do and be silent!": was your Founder's programmatic motto. To do and be silent! How relevant is this programme of life and apostolate even today.

Treasure, beloved Sons, the teachings of your Saint! They indicate the certain way for the Coming of the Kingdom of God!

2. A second characteristic of St Leonard Murialdo was pedagogical concern. He was unquestionably a great educator, like Don Bosco, and dedicated his whole life to the education of children and young people, convinced of the value of the preventive method and of Christocentric guidance.

Let us meditate together on what he wrote to confreres gathered in the Spiritual Exercises of 1898: "May love of God bring forth zeal for the salvation of the young: "ne perdantur", St John Chrysostom says, "so that they may not be lost", not be damned, and therefore ... real zeal to save them, to instruct them well in religion, to instil in them love of God, of Jesus Christ, and of Mary, and zeal to save themselves. But all this will not be obtained unless one has humility of heart".

It is an exhortation which the Pope wishes to echo this morning. let this be your spur: educate to save!

From the "pedagogy of eternal salvation" there springs logically the "pedagogy of love". Commit your lives completely to edifying, to forming children and young people, behaving in such a way that your life will be a continual example of virtue for them: it is necessary to become a child with children and everything to everyone in order to win all to Christ!

Kindness of heart, affability, patience, politeness, gaiety, are necessary elements in order to attract attention, to form, to lead to Christ, to save, and they often call for effort and sacrifice. In spite of the difficulties, you must continue in your labour with love and dedication, because the educator's work has an eternal value.

3. Finally, I would like to point out a last characteristic, which seems to me important to define more completely the nature of Murialdo, and it is his deep faithfulness to the Church and to the Pope. He lived in a very difficult age for the Church, especially in Italy, and, intelligent and far-sighted as he was, he had understood perfectly that times were changing quickly and that it was

better for the Church not to have any longer the concerns of "temporal power". His letters, so profound and balanced, bear witness to this. He trusted in Providence, following the example of St Joseph, whose name your Congregation bears.

Act like this, you too! Love the Church! Love the Pope! Be docile to his teachings and his directives, convinced that the Lord wants unity in truth and in charity, and that the Holy Spirit assists the Vicar of Christ in his indispensable and salvific work. And pray, and get your young people and your faithful to pray, for the Pope and for the Church.

We cannot conclude without addressing the Blessed Virgin, so loved and venerated by Murialdo, who had recourse to her as the Universal Mediatrix of all grace. The thought of Mary returned continually in his letters. In them he inculcated the recitation of the Rosary, entrusted his Sons with spreading devotion to the Holy Virgin, and stated: "If one wishes to do a little good among the young, one must instil love for Mary in them". The beneficial work carried out by your Founder, is the best confirmation of this. So follow his example in this matter too.

With these wishes, while I think with admiration of the great work you have carried out in various parts of the world, especially for the sake of youth, I implore from the Lord the abundance of his graces and his favours on your apostolate, and with particular benevolence I impart to you, beloved sons, and to all your young people and your parishes, the Apostolic Blessing.

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