



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
TO THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC,
MEXICO AND THE BAHAMAS

**MEETING WITH CLOISTERED NUNS
IN THE GUADALAJARA CATHEDRAL**

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Tuesday, 30 January 1979

Beloved Enclosed Sisters,

In this Cathedral of Guadalajara, I wish to greet you with the beautiful and expressive words that we frequently repeat in the liturgical assembly: "May the Lord be with you." (Roman Missal). Yes, may the Lord, to whom you have dedicated your whole life, always be with you.

How could a meeting of the Pope with contemplative Sisters fail to take place during the visit to Mexico? If I would like to see so many persons, you have a special place because of your particular consecration to the Lord and to the Church. For this reason, the Pope, too, wishes to be close to you.

This meeting wishes to be the continuation of the one I had with other Mexican Sisters. I said many things to them which are also for you, but now I wish to refer to what is more specifically yours.

How often the Magisterium of the Church has shown its great esteem for, and appreciation of, your life dedicated to prayer, silence and to an exceptional way of dedication to God! In these moments when everything is changing so much, does this type of life continue to have a meaning or is it something that is already outdated?

The Pope tells you: Yes, your life is more important than ever, your complete consecration is fully relevant today. In a world that is losing the sense of the divine, in the light of the over-estimation of material things, you, beloved Sisters, committed from your cloisters to be witnesses of certain values for which you live, be witnesses to the Lord for the world of today, and instil with your prayer a new breath of life into the Church and into modern man.

Especially in contemplative life, it is a question of realizing a difficult unity: to manifest to the world the mystery of the Church in this world and to enjoy here already, teaching them to men, as St Paul says, "the things that are above" (Col 3:1).

Being a contemplative does not mean breaking radically with the world, with the apostolate. The contemplative has to find her specific way of extending the kingdom of God, of collaborating in the building up of the earthly city, not only with her prayers and sacrifices, but also with her testimony, silent, it is true, yet which can be understood by the men of good will with whom she is in contact.

For this reason you have to find your own style which, within a contemplative vision, will let you share with your brothers the gratuitous gift of God.

Your consecrated life comes from baptismal consecration and expresses it with greater fullness. With a free response to the call of the Holy Spirit, you decided to follow Christ, consecrating yourselves to him completely. "The more stable and firm this bond (the unbreakable bond of union that exists between Christ and his Church) is,"—the Council says—"the more perfect will the Christian's religious consecration be" (*Lumen Gentium*, 4).

You contemplative religious women feel an attraction that brings you to the Lord. Relying on God, you abandon yourselves to his fatherly action which raises you to him and transforms you into him, while he prepares you for eternal contemplation which is the ultimate goal for us all. How could you advance along this path and be faithful to the grace that animates you, if you did not respond with your whole being, by means of a dynamism the impulse of which is love, to this call that directs you permanently to God? So, consider any other activity as a testimony, offered to the Lord, of your deep communion with him, so that he may grant you *that* purity of intention which is so necessary in order to meet him in prayer itself. In this way you will contribute to the extension of the kingdom of God, with the testimony of your life and with a "hidden apostolic fruitfulness" (*Perfectae Caritatis*, 7).

Gathered in Christ's name, your communities have as their centre the Eucharist, "a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 47).

Through the Eucharist, the world also is present at the centre of your life of prayer and offering, as the Council explained: "Let no one think that their consecrated way of life alienates religious from other men or makes them useless for human society. Though in some cases they have no direct

relations with their contemporaries, still in a deeper way they have their fellow men present with them in the heart of Christ and cooperate with them spiritually, so that the building up of human society may always have its foundation in the Lord and have him as its goal: otherwise those who build it may have laboured in vain" (*Lumen Gentium*, 46).

Contemplating you with the tenderness of the Lord when he called his disciples "little flock" (cf. Lk 12:32) and announced to them that his Father had been pleased to give them the Kingdom, I beg you: keep the simplicity of the "little ones" of the Gospel. Know how to find it in intimate and deep relations with Christ and in contact with your brothers. You will then know "overflowing joy through the action of the Holy Spirit", the joy of those who are introduced into the secrets of the Kingdom (cf. *Apostolic Exhortation on the Renewal of Religious Life*, 54).

May the beloved Mother of the Lord, whom you invoke in Mexico with the sweet name of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and following whose example you have dedicated your life to God, obtain for you, on your daily path, that unfailing joy that only Jesus can give.

Receive my warm Apostolic Blessing as a great greeting of peace which is not exhausted in you present here, but which extends invisibly to all your contemplative Sisters in Mexico.

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