



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN
THE ANNUAL CONVENTION OF "SERRA INTERNATIONAL"**

Thursday, 6 July 1995

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

1. It is a great pleasure for me to greet you, members of "*Serra International*", and to welcome you to Rome at the conclusion of your Annual Convention, held this year in Genoa. I am especially happy to have this occasion to address these words of appreciation and encouragement to you for the important work which you do in promoting vocations in the Church.

2. A vocation is a gift from God, a gift for the person who receives it, and a gift for the whole Church as well (cf. John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 41). It may be likened to a seed planted in the deepest part of a person's being. This seed needs to be watered and tended so that it may develop and grow. If given the proper attention and care, it will come to full maturity and bear much fruit in the Church and in the world.

The gift is given by God; it is he who plants the seed. But *the Church is responsible for nurturing its growth and attending to its needs*. The Second Vatican Council reminds us very clearly that "the duty of fostering vocations is incumbent on the whole Christian community" (*Optatam Totius*, 2), and I emphasized this very point in the Post-Synodal Exhortation "*Pastores Dabo Vobis*". Referring to priestly vocations, I wrote that "there is an urgent need, especially nowadays, for a more widespread and deeply felt conviction that all the members of the Church, without exception, have the grace and responsibility to look after vocations" (John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 41).

I know that you Serrans share this conviction very deeply, and that with great commitment you have taken this responsibility to heart. Through various activities and projects, with your moral and material support, *and above all by your prayers*, you make an important contribution to the

promotion of priestly vocations in the Church. I ask you to continue to perform this valuable service and to make others aware of this vital task!

3. Dear friends: in your local Churches, under the direction of your Bishops, work to create *an environment which truly fosters vocations*. Such an environment can be understood as a necessary part of that "culture of life" about which I wrote in the Encyclical Letter "[Evangelium Vitae](#)", insofar as it presupposes and includes an essential supernatural dimension. For, "the life which the Son of God came to give to human beings cannot be reduced to mere existence in time", rather it presents "a perspective which is beyond time" because it is "eternal life" (John Paul II, [Evangelium Vitae](#), 37). Certainly priesthood and the promotion of priestly vocations is intimately connected with this eternal life, which is "the life of God himself" ([Ibid.](#), 38). This truth about life fills us with wonder and gratitude, and reveals our destiny as that of "fellowship with God in knowledge and love of him" ([Ibid.](#), 38)

Consequently, this culture of life puts humanity back in touch with its Creator and with itself; it helps people re-discover the great value of faith, prayer and contemplation; it enables men and women to recognize and experience anew the sublime workings of the Spirit. Such a culture will strengthen Christian families, that "domestic Church" which offers great prospects for the birth of vocations. It will encourage schools and the educating community at large to provide a correct understanding of the human and divine dimensions of vocation. This culture will inspire other lay faithful, each according to their own particular walk of life, to inculcate in all people – especially youth – an appreciation of vocation and mission in the Church.

4. As you meet the demands and face the challenges of this apostolate of yours, I assure you of my prayers and commend you to the maternal care of Mary, Queen of the Apostles, who remains forever the perfect model for those who seek to be united with her Son in his saving work for all humanity.

In the love of Christ the Redeemer, I impart my Apostolic Blessing, which I willingly extend to your families and loved ones at home.

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