



# The Holy See

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## **ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS**

### **POPE JOHN PAUL II**

**TO THE BRIGITTINE SISTERS** *Thursday, 5 February 1998* 1. I am pleased to extend my cordial welcome to you, dear Brigittine Sisters, who have gathered in Rome these days for your Eighth General Elective Chapter. I extend a particular greeting to Mother Tekla, elected Abbess General once again, and I thank her for the affectionate words she has addressed to me on behalf of you all. In congratulating her on the new mandate conferred on her by her fellow sisters, I hope that under her guidance the order will continue its generous service to Christ and the Church. My cordial thoughts go also to Mons. Mario Russotto, chaplain to the Brigittine Oblates; with him I greet the dear priests and lay people, Brigittine Oblates, who wished to join the sisters on this special occasion. 2. "Watch at all times, praying" (Lk 21:36). In responding to Jesus' invitation, your order, founded by St Birgitta of Sweden, seeks first of all to live the charism of praising the Lord, witnessing to the absolute primacy of God and to his tender love for humanity. The experience of God, matured in contemplation, also leads you to live your sanctification in reparative communion with the Divine Saviour, who in his priestly prayer consecrated himself to the Father for his brethren (cf. Jn 17:19). In your order this charism is enriched by the ecumenical dimension, borrowed from the noble heart of Birgitta, who sacrificed herself and strove with all her might so that the Pope's return from Avignon to Rome might serve as the necessary premise for restoring peace among all Christians. In refounding the order, Mother Mary Elizabeth wished to revive the reparative dimension of ancient monastic inspiration, adapting it to the contemporary situation. In this way, she gave the institute a clear orientation towards prayer and reparation with an ecumenical emphasis, in union with Jesus' prayer at the Last Supper: "That they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they may also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn 17:21). 3. In addition to ecumenical fervour, there is another aspect of your charism which is very clear: your missionary commitment. Following the example of St Birgitta, you live the primacy of giving praise to God as a continuous act of love for humanity, which has been wounded by sin and division. In fully and willingly accepting the invitation of the Spirit, through the enlightened witness of St Birgitta and Mother Elizabeth on the threshold of a new millennium, your General Chapter is called to give the order new zeal and renewed enthusiasm, in order to serve on the front lines of evangelization and charity in the modern world. This project is the goal of the centres for spirituality and ecumenical activity which, on the example of those in Farfa and Lugano, you plan to establish over the next six years in Gdańsk and Tallinn. I urge you courageously to pursue this worthy apostolate, to show the men and women of our time the exciting possibilities offered by a life of total dedication to God and to one's brothers and sisters. May your houses be a school of prayer, especially for young people, through lectio divina and Eucharistic adoration, which in many of your communities continues all day with the constant participation of the lay faithful. I also invite you to strengthen your presence in the Scandinavian countries, where your Gospel witness of poverty and hospitality is already appreciated and bearing fruit. 4. May St Birgitta renew your special concern for her country and your ardent desire to

proclaim the Gospel to the children of those beloved nations. May your charity, which has already borne promising fruits in India and Mexico, be generously extended to other situations in the developing countries and, without surrendering to the inevitable difficulties, also make present there, by your words and deeds, the light of the Gospel, an inexhaustible source of civilization and human development. Wherever your communities are found, may they encourage those who approach them to live the unity of the Church, which, "called to the mission of proclaiming and establishing among all peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God, ... is, on earth, the seed and the beginning of that kingdom" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 5). This is the commitment to be stressed in your ecumenical initiatives, and especially in the activities you are planning with a committee of Catholics and Lutherans for the approaching Jubilee of the Year 2000. May your prayers and your constant ecumenical concern further the journey towards the full unity of all Christians. With these wishes, as I entrust each of you to the heavenly protection of the Mother of God and St Birgitta, I cordially impart a special Apostolic Blessing to you all. © Copyright 1998 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana