



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO CHIAVARI AND BRESCIA (ITALY)
(SEPTEMBER 18-20, 1998)

***ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO CLERGY, SEMINARIANS AND RELIGIOUS OF CHIAVARI***

Friday, 18 September 1998

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. I am pleased to have this evening's meeting, which enables me to spend a special moment of communion with you, priests, seminarians, consecrated men and women, and, with you, cloistered women religious.

I cordially greet your dear Bishop, Alberto Maria Careggio. I also affectionately greet Bishop emeritus Daniele Ferrari, and all of you who have gathered here to confirm your attachment to the Successor of Peter and to the local Church in which Providence has placed you to bear witness.

2. Dear priests, and you young people who are preparing for the priesthood, the Master is constantly at work in the world and says to each one of those he has chosen: "Follow me" (Mt 9:9). It is a call that demands the daily affirmation of a loving answer. May your heart always be watchful! One day you will have the joy of sharing in the happiness of the servants whom "the master finds awake when he comes" (Lk 12:37).

Intimacy with Jesus Christ is the soul of priestly ministry. It grows stronger the more it is watered by the dew of prayer and nourished by the *celebration* and *contemplation* of the *Eucharisticum mysterium*, the summit of the covenant between God and man. The priest thus becomes a living icon of that *officium laudis* which is unceasingly offered in the universe and is raised to God, the Creator and Redeemer.

Dear friends, may you be constantly committed to *imitating the Good Shepherd*. May you listen to those who are

entrusted to your care; engage in dialogue with everyone, generously welcoming those who knock at the door of your heart and offering everyone the gifts that the divine goodness has entrusted to you. Your task is to show to man the lofty dignity to which he is called and to help him reach it. Persevere in communion with your Bishop and in mutual collaboration, both for your own spiritual growth in love and for that of your communities.

3. Dear consecrated men and women, the Church expects much of you, whose mission is to bear witness in every historical age to “the way of life which Jesus, the supreme Consecrated One and missionary of the Father for the sake of his kingdom, embraced and proposed to his disciples” (Ap. Exhort. *Vita consecrata*, n. 22). Praised be God for the many charisms which add to the beauty of the Church's countenance and for the edifying fruits of so many lives given totally to the cause of the kingdom!

May God be your only wealth: let yourselves be moulded by him, so that the holiness, truth and love of the heavenly Father will become visible to our contemporaries, who are thirsting for real values. Sustained by the grace of the Spirit, speak to people with the eloquence of a life that is transfigured by the newness of Easter. Your whole life will thus become a *diakonia* of the consecration that every baptized person received when he was incorporated into Christ.

Be faithful to the sublime vocation you have received. Become missionaries by word and example. Nourish your commitment at the well-springs of Scripture, the sacraments and the constant praise of God, and let the Spirit's action increasingly penetrate the depths of your soul. You will thus be effective agents of the new evangelization, to which the Church is committed on the threshold of the new millennium.

4. And now a special word to you, dear cloistered nuns, who are the sign of the exclusive union of the Church-Bride with her Lord, whom she loves above all else. You are impelled by an irresistible attraction that draws you to God, the exclusive goal of your every sentiment and of your every action. The contemplation of God's beauty has become your inheritance, your plan of life, your way of being present in the Church.

Your life is a *witness to the power of the Spirit who acts in history* and fashions it with his grace. How fruitful is your dwelling in the courts of the Lord's house! May the walls that surround your life not keep you away from human sufferings, but rather spiritually immerse you in them, to bring them the divine comfort obtained by your prayer. May the mysterious effectiveness of your intercession accompany the steps of the Lord's servants, who walk the roads of the world proclaiming the kingdom of God to people of every culture and language. Thank you, dear sisters, for the crucial contribution you are making to the Church!

5. Dear brothers and sisters, everyone, according to his or her own vocation, is called to care for the People of God. Be considerate with the unhappy, generous with those who reach for your hand, magnanimous with those who implore God's mercy, firm in the defence of the poor, obedient to the Church and her Bishops.

May you be accompanied by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, who consecrated her entire life to Christ her Son and to the advance of God's kingdom.

My affectionate Blessing to you all.

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