



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO THE MISSIONARIES OF OUR LADY OF LA SALETTE

Thursday, 4 May 2000 Dear Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette, I am pleased to welcome you as you hold your 29th General Chapter. With your Superior General and his Council, whom I cordially greet, you represent all your confrères in many countries of the world. On behalf of the Church I warmly thank you for your efforts in recent years to expand the field of your apostolate, especially in India and the countries of Eastern Europe, with plans to establish yourselves soon in Indonesia and Myanmar. May the Lord abundantly bless your generous apostolic efforts and enable you to persevere with the daring and enthusiasm of the generations of missionaries who have preceded you! You have chosen as the theme of your Chapter: *"Let us build the future together"*. You hope to build your institute's future together with God's help, giving new vigour to La Salette charism that unites you through creative fidelity to your vocation and by notably stressing the essential place of mission, community life and interdependence in communion. In the light of Our Lady of La Salette's message, you give an important place to the ministry of reconciliation. This Jubilee year is a privileged opportunity to rediscover the fullness of the mercy of God, who wants to reconcile man to himself and to his brothers and sisters. In fact, "the Church, as a reconciled and reconciling community, cannot forget that at the source of her gift and mission of reconciliation is the initiative, full of compassionate love and mercy, of that God who is love and who out of love created human beings; and he created them so that they might live in friendship with him and in communion with one another" (*Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, n. 10). In this spirit, I keenly hope that your Chapter will encourage the institute's members to have a renewed awareness of their participation in the Church's reconciling mission, which is the heart of their missionary vocation, by continuously helping the faithful to accept divine forgiveness in order to bear witness to it in all nations. As I wrote on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the apparition of Our Lady: "La Salette is a message of hope, for our hope is nourished by the intercession of her who is the Mother of mankind" (*Letter to Bishop Louis Dufaux of Grenoble*, 6 May 1996; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 3 July 1996, p. 8). May the proclamation of this hope always be at the heart of your encounter with the men and women of today! Through it our contemporaries can be assured that divisions are not irreparable and that it is always possible to repent of one's infidelities, in order to build a reconciled humanity and to follow the Lord, for nothing is beyond God's reach. Dear Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette, do not be afraid to bear witness that Christ came to share our humanity so that we might share in his divinity. Boldly proclaim the Word of God, a force that can transform hearts, societies and cultures. Under the gaze of Mary, a motherly presence among the People of God, constantly invite people to conversion, communion and solidarity. Do not hesitate to proclaim to your brethren that God walks with people, that he calls them to new life and encourages them in order to lead them to true freedom. The quality of your spiritual and community life will be a particularly eloquent expression of the authenticity and fruitfulness of your proclamation of the Gospel message. This

requires that the missionary be willing to live in a permanent state of conversion. The true missionary is the one who resolutely commits himself to following the paths of holiness. "Unless the missionary is a contemplative he cannot proclaim Christ in a credible way. He is a witness to the experience of God, and must be able to say with the Apostles: "that which we have looked upon ... concerning the word of life, ... we proclaim also to you' (1 Jn 1: 1-3)" (*Redemptoris missio*, n. 91). After the enthusiasm of the first encounter with Christ on the paths of mission, it is necessary to persevere in one's daily efforts through an intense prayer life, penance and the gift of self. By sharing in Christ's mission through their word and the witness of their entire life, missionaries will lead people to open themselves to the Good News, which it is their mission to bring to everyone (cf. *Decree of Approval of the Constitutions*, 6 June 1985). Thus they will be able "to build the future together", to live courageously the unknown tomorrow, confident of the presence of Christ, who accompanies them at every moment of their lives in their meetings with individuals and with peoples. I entrust the members of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette to the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Reconciliation, and cordially impart to everyone my affectionate Apostolic Blessing, which I gladly extend to all who benefit from their ministry and to everyone who shares the spirituality of La Salette. © Copyright 2000 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana
