



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE SISTERS OF THE CONGREGATION
OF THE DAUGHTERS OF JESUS**

Saturday, 26 May 2001

Dear Sisters,

1. I am very pleased to have this meeting with you who are celebrating your 15th General Chapter, during which you would like to discern God's will for your institute at this time in history, at the beginning of a new millennium.

I affectionately greet Sr María Pilar Martínez García, re-elected as Superior General, her Councillors and her other close collaborators, as well as those who are taking part in this Chapter.

Please also convey this greeting to the sisters you represent, who are carrying out their mission in various countries of Africa, America, Asia and Europe. With their pastoral and educational activity they enrich the particular Churches in which they live and above all are the bearers of their charism, which is always a gift granted to the Church by the Spirit.

2. The fifth anniversary of the beatification of Cándida María de Jesús, your foundress, occurred a few days ago. I had the joy of raising her to the honour of the altars with one of the first Sisters, Bl. María Antonia Bandrés Elósegui. Mother Cándida knew how to progress on the path of holiness with fidelity and constancy but at the same time, almost 130 years ago, she began a project of religious life in Salamanca so that others, in giving themselves totally to God and rendering a better service to the Church, would follow in her footsteps.

So it was with Bl. María Antonia, the holiness of whose life is as it were confirmation of that original project, since "every sound tree bears good fruit" (Mt 7,17). It is up to you to yield good fruit today, with an ever deeper devotion to your vocation and the constant aspiration to be a sign

of Christ's presence and a channel for God's call with your life witness.

The coincidence of this heartfelt commemoration with your Chapter's work is an eloquent invitation to reproduce courageously the foundress' enterprising initiative, creativity and holiness, in response to the signs of the times emerging in today's world (cf. *Vita consecrata*, n. 37). The total and unconditional gift of self to God continues to be an unchanging reference point for all planning, since it should not be forgotten that "God ... asks us really to cooperate with his grace and therefore invites us to invest all our resources of intelligence and energy in serving the cause of the kingdom". But woe to us if we forget that "without Christ we can do nothing" (*Novo Millennio ineunte*, n. 38).

3. These considerations acquire special significance in the pastoral work of education, one of the most distinguishing facets of your charism and tradition, and an essential element of the Church's mission (cf. *Vita consecrata*, n. 96). Indeed, those who have deeply perceived the sublime beauty of God and feel rooted in Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life will not be content to impart a mere set of notions to be memorized by the young people, but will stir up in them the desire to grow in all of life's dimensions and, above all, will foster their enthusiasm for "an ulterior truth, which would explain the meaning of life. And it is therefore a search, which can reach its end only in reaching the absolute" (*Fides et ratio*, n. 33). As they face this sublime task, teachers cannot remain extraneous to what they teach. Jesus himself speaks "as the Father taught me" (Jn 8,28) and the Apostle proclaims "that which we have seen and heard" (I Jn 1,3; Acts 4,20).

To pass on knowledge and culture competently, to awaken social responsibility, to imbue the moral conscience with the loftiest ethical values and to illuminate the sublime transcendent vocation of every human being are certainly urgent tasks, especially in a world that is frequently tempted by triviality or immediate material gain. In addition to this, it is also important for women religious to be a prophetic sign. For this reason, you should give priority in your mission to displaying a special following of Christ, clearly showing that you continue to cultivate in history "the seeds of the kingdom of God, which Jesus himself sowed during his earthly life whenever he responded to those who came to him with their spiritual and material needs" (*Novo Millennio ineunte*, n. 49).

In this way, you also proclaim your hope in a future for humanity according to God, without leaving room for discouragement or gloomy predictions. On the contrary, the woman religious teacher accounts for her faith "in the wonders of grace accomplished by the Lord in those whom he loves" (*Vita consecrata*, n. 20) and with her tenacious trust in the possibilities of every human person she can surprise the world and cause new hopes to keep springing up in it. This is a way of revealing daily "to all believers the heavenly goods, which are already present in this age" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 44).

4. At the end of this meeting, in this as in other areas of your apostolic activity, I invite you to be

attentive to the needs emerging in our time and to give them a response that originates in the heart of Christ and in the Church's primitive mission. Indeed, "the more one lives in Christ, the better one can serve him in others, going even to the furthest missionary outposts and facing the greatest dangers" (*Vita consecrata*, n. 76).

I express to the Superior General and her collaborators my very best wishes for the responsible office entrusted to them. The importance you give to the prudent discernment, in accordance with your Ignatian heritage, of God's will and your firm determination to follow it lays solid foundations in order to face fearlessly the decisions, at times difficult, that are part of your service of governance.

To conclude, I would like to place the fruits of this 15th General Congregation and the future of the Institute in the hands of the Virgin Mary. In her you will find the joy and hope that must permeate your personal and community life, your work and your mission. With these wishes, I impart my Apostolic Blessing to you and I am happy to extend it to all the Daughters of Jesus.