



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE SISTERS OF SAINT-PAUL DE CHARTRES

Saturday 15 September 2001

To the Sisters of Saint-Paul de Chartres

I am pleased to receive you and offer you a warm welcome. On the occasion of your 45th General Chapter, when you are preparing to elect a new general council, you wanted to meet the Successor of Peter, showing your filial attachment to him and your keen sense of the Church. In assuring you of my spiritual closeness during your chapter, I gladly call upon the Holy Spirit to grant that you may imitate the zeal of the Apostle Paul, your holy patron, to share in the new creativity in charity that I hoped for at the beginning of the millennium. May contemplation of the face of Christ, the source of all apostolic fruitfulness, encourage your fidelity to your founding charism and make your missionary commitment more dynamic, especially among the most deprived!

Since the time of your foundation in 1696 by Fr Louis Chauvet, you have always wanted to maintain your fidelity to your charism by being especially dedicated to the service of youth and of the poorest. Your desire to be conformed totally to the Lord himself has impelled you to seek his countenance in the faces of those with whom he chose to identify himself. Today on five continents, your presence in the field of education and health care and with social outcasts is still today an eminent sign of the "folly" of Christ's love for all people and a courageous appeal to work for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Today on all continents, the young are living in difficult situations, influenced by materialism, cultural changes, family divisions, violence in all its forms, the lack of moral and spiritual standards. In your educational missions, together with the lay people who collaborate in your institutions, it is important that you offer a scientific, human, moral and religious training of high quality, thereby giving young people the chance to build up and structure their personality and to

overcome the problems they encounter, enabling them to envisage a more peaceful future. Do not be afraid to suggest the path of faith and to pass on joyfully the Lord's call to the priesthood or to the consecrated life. It is also important that adults help young people to discover the beauty of that specific call which is Christian marriage. They expect their elders to show them the paths of holiness.

While your General Chapter offers you the occasion to be spiritually renewed in order to set out anew in hope, I encourage you to root your consecration in Christ, the One consecrated to the Father whose loving, saving presence you are asked to show, demonstrating by your whole life the happiness of being consecrated totally to the *sequela Christi*. In the mystery of his death and Resurrection, Christ revealed to humanity the truth about God and about man, inviting each believer to join in the dynamism of the Easter mystery to bring the Gospel to the world. Careful to respond to the new challenges you will have to face with confidence and comforted by the prayer of the elderly sisters, learn to spend each day with Christ who takes us from death to life! Let him renew you, "to build with the help of his Spirit fraternal communities, to join him in washing the feet of the poor, and to contribute in your own unique way to the transfiguration of the world" (*Vita consecrata*, n. 110)!

As I entrust you to the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows whom the Church invites us to celebrate today, I impart a special Apostolic Blessing to you, which I extend to all the sisters of your congregation, to the lay people who work with you and to everyone who benefits from your apostolate.