



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE SISTERS OF THE ORDER OF THE
MOST HOLY SAVIOUR OF ST BRIDGET**

Monday, 9 February 2004

Dear Sisters,

1. Your visit today gives me great joy and I gladly welcome you at the end of the Ninth General Chapter of your Order of the Most Holy Saviour of St Bridget. Your Sisters who are working in various countries of the world are gathered here with you in spirit around the Successor of Peter. I send my most cordial greeting to each and every one.

In a special way I affectionately greet the General Abbess, Mother Tekla Famiglietti, who has been re-elected for an additional six-years term. In thanking her for the sentiments she has expressed to me, I offer to her as well as to the new General Council my very best wishes for fruitful work at the service of the praiseworthy Brigittine Family, which has grown in recent years and has been enriched by new institutions and activities. I thank God with you for this comforting apostolic development and for the promising growth of vocations.

2. *"Returning to the roots... for a renewal of religious life"*: this is the theme on which you have chosen to reflect at your Chapter Meeting. You place yourselves in an atmosphere of silence and prayer to listen to the Holy Spirit in order to discern the priorities of your Order in this age of ours. Every authentic renewal requires a wise recovery of its original spirit so as to express the founding charism in apostolic choices in tune with the needs of the times. Therefore, faithful to the particular monastic vocation that marks the Brigittine Family, you have taken pains to reaffirm the absolute primacy that God must occupy in the lives of each one of you and in your communities. You are called first of all to be "specialists of the spirit", souls on fire with divine love, contemplatives ceaselessly dedicated to prayer.

3. Only if you are "specialists of the spirit", like St Bridget, will you be able to embody in our age the charism of Gospel radicalness and unity inherited from Bl. Elizabeth Hesselblad. Through the hospitality and welcome that you offer in your houses you will be able to witness to God's merciful love for every person and to the yearning for unity that Christ bequeathed to his disciples.

In my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, I wrote that the great challenge of the third millennium was to "make the Church the home and school of communion", and that to this end it is necessary to "promote a spirituality of communion" (cf. n. 43). I ask you, dear Sisters, to be tireless builders of the "great ecumenism of holiness". Your ecumenical activity is particularly appreciated because it is accomplished in countries in Northern Europe where fewer Catholics are present, and because the encouragement of dialogue with our brothers and sisters of other Christian denominations is important.

May the Virgin Mary, Mother of Christ and of the Church, watch over your Order and may St Bridget and Bl. Elizabeth Hesselblad intercede for you. I accompany you with daily remembrance before the Lord, as I cordially bless you and all your communities.