



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE NATIONAL DIRECTORS AND COLLABORATORS
OF THE PONTIFICAL MISSION SOCIETIES**

Tuesday, 11 May 2004

*Your Eminence,
Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,
Dear National Directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies,*

1. I welcome you all with great pleasure to Peter's house here in the Vatican after another year of missionary service in your Churches, scattered throughout the world. I am very pleased to meet you because in a very special way you are "tireless workers for his mercy and his peace" (*General Audience*, 14 April 2004, n. 4; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition [ORE], 21 April 2004, p. 11).

I cordially greet and thank Cardinal Crescenzo Sepe, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, for his words on behalf of you all.

2. Dear brothers and sisters, in the stormy times in which humanity is living, the *Pontifical Mission Societies* that serve the Churches across the world are a sound reference for all who seek the truth that saves. Indeed, by proclaiming Christ, you point out to them the Way to take to reach salvation.

You are offering a message of love and hope. By means of the *missionary animation* that you carry out in obedience to the commandment of Christ, the Saviour of all, you collaborate in taking the "Good News" to the ends of the earth. In fact, the living Christ continues to offer his message of salvation to all without distinction.

3. You are heralds of the hope that was born from the death and Resurrection of Christ. You must have special concern, therefore, for those peoples of the world whose suffering is the greatest and whose needs are the most acute: the populations of the so-called Third World. Your commitment

is to stand beside the Gospel missionaries who preach solidarity and love and sacrifice themselves for peace, sometimes even to the point of giving their life, because "the love of Christ impels [them]" (II Cor 5: 14).

Thus, you are Cyreneans who help the Saviour to carry his Cross in every person who suffers and dies. To all intents and purposes, you are authentic missionaries in our globalized world in which suffering for truth and justice goes beyond every national boundary.

When you feel distressed about other peoples' suffering and strive to alleviate their great need for aid, you are at the same time helping your own people to emerge from the grip of selfishness, to save them from being suffocated by abundance and emptiness and from behaviour at times unworthy of human beings. It is not merely a matter of almsgiving, as my venerable Predecessor Pope Pius XII wrote, but of carrying out a duty that is a feature of our Christian identity: to help those in need.

Therefore, be preachers of the Resurrection and of Life, as were your own Founders and Foundresses. It is your task to proclaim the Risen Christ, together with the entire Church. You too can say with the Apostle John: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life... we proclaim to you" (I Jn 1: 1). Indeed, when you meditate on Christ's words with sincere faith and work in his Spirit, you know that his words apply to you: "as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt 25: 40).

4. It comforts me to learn that you are arranging to *update* your Statues. This shows your desire to continue carrying out your mission of "mercy and peace" ever more and better. May the Spirit of the Risen Lord reveal his will to you, as he did to the Apostles, in your choice of new ways to cooperate in the mission to bring truth, justice and peace to all the people of our time, according to the Gospel.

The goal of the General Assembly of your Superior Council is to seek the paths of the Lord for a renewed mission in this world that is constantly changing. Your concern motivates you to bring love and mercy to all people, our brothers and sisters in the one human family. I therefore urge you to collaborate, as you do already, with the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples in the continuous search for "new paths" for the Gospel. In brief, *missionary animation* and *cooperation* are the *raison d'être* of your existence and the single purpose of your constant "anxiety for all the Churches" (II Cor 11: 28), with a view to the world's salvation.

5. Aware of this, I offer you my warmest good wishes for an ever generous commitment, even in all kinds of difficulties. I am sure that you share in "the joy and the hope, the grief and the anguish of the men of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 1). Actually, this is a consequence of living in the love of "the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the

Father of mercies and God of all consolation, who comforts us in all our affliction" (II Cor 1: 3-4).

May my Apostolic Blessing which I most cordially impart to you be a pledge of this divine consolation.