



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II

TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE GENERAL CHAPTER

OF THE AUGUSTINIAN RECOLLECTS *Friday, 5 November 2004 To the General Chapter of Augustinian*

*Recollects*¹. It is my pleasure to cordially welcome you, President and those participating in the General Chapter of Augustinian Recollects, representing the various Provinces of your Order. I wish to express to you the Church's gratitude for your witness of life as consecrated persons and for the apostolic activity carried out in the 18 countries that are located on the three continents where you are present. The Chapter is a decisive moment for the life of the Order, for it must guarantee fidelity to your own spiritual patrimony in a creative way, enabling the treasure of your spirituality and specific mission to shine brightly in our epoch. It is also an eminent expression of the unity that must prevail among all Religious who have the same vocation and mission in the Church. I invite you, therefore, to live in this atmosphere of unity and fraternal charity, to give an example to all the other Communities and to be witnesses, in the Church and before humanity, of the spiritual wealth that the Spirit has poured out upon you *"for the common good"* (1 Cor 12: 7).² I exhort you to keep especially present in your reflections and deliberations the key that I pointed out for every apostolic and spiritual programme: "starting afresh from Christ"; "this programme for all times is our programme for the Third Millennium" (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 29). Your own religious consecration makes you well aware of this and unites you to Christ's sacrifice in a particular way. In your tradition of observance and contemplation, a deep spiritual life, strongly linked to the interior life and a relentless search for God, is always the starting point for authentic renewal and is the soul of every apostolic initiative. Nothing can take the place of this intimate experience of faith to fulfil your vocation as prophets of the Kingdom of God. Indeed, "it is precisely the spiritual quality of the consecrated life which can inspire the men and women of our day.... In this way the consecrated life will become an attractive witness" (*Vita Consecrata*, n. 93). It remains so at the beginning of the third millennium, offering clarity amid the confusion that an evermore globalized world can create, spreading peace and hope in many troubled situations, manifesting the ineffable beauty of God in the absence of supreme values and witnessing to his love for every human being created in his image, however disfigured and victimized this humanity may be by a mentality that is destructive, divisive and isolating. Reflecting in your being and acting the One who is the "light of the world" (Jn 8: 12), you will serve the Church and humanity, always thirsting for God.³ An evermore authentic supernatural life, founded on assiduous prayer and participation in the sacraments, is fundamental for a successful apostolate. Particularly needed is the Eucharist, which is the true presence of Christ himself in human history. It is also the "source and epiphany" of this fraternal communion (cf. *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, n. 21) that must reign in your communities and be a living message of concord in a world often dominated by rivalry and conflict. Within your Order, you have experienced the novelty of the presence of communities in very different countries, together with the progressive increase of Religious entering with different nationalities. Of course, this becomes a challenge, but also a stupendous opportunity to arrive at the root of the true meaning of communal life: founded upon the

mystery of the Trinity and not upon human affinity. In this sense, shared fraternal life in community is a continual demonstration of a communion that, from on high, knows how to harmoniously blend people's different characters and the traditions typical of each country. It is the communion of those who, nourished by the same Bread, remain united by the unceasing desire to seek God and the effort to serve the Gospel unconditionally. Indeed, in Christ, who is "*all the truth*" (Jn 16: 13), is found all the varied forms where his light is reflected in the many facets of human reality.⁴ I pray the Holy Spirit to abundantly pour upon you his gifts so that in the different work of your Chapter, you may discern what the Spirit "is suggesting to the different communities" (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, n. 23). May he give you strength to face present and future challenges and perseverance in your unselfish apostolic commitment, which is so much appreciated by the Church, who continues to ask this of you and thanks you for it. As a little more than 75 years have passed since the Order's solemn consecration to the Most Holy Virgin Mary, I place in her hands the Chapter as it unfolds and the spiritual progress of all of your confreres. At the same time, I cordially bless everyone.