



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE CLERICS REGULAR OF ST PAUL

1. On the occasion of the fifth centenary of St Anthony Mary Zaccaria's birth, I would like to join in spirit in the joy of this congregation, as well as in that of the Sisters Angelicals of St Paul and the Lay Movement of St Paul, raising fervent thanks to the Lord for giving the Church this tireless imitator of the Apostle to the Gentiles and luminous model of pastoral charity. I express the most ardent hope that the solemn Jubilee celebrations will be a precious opportunity to highlight the gift of holiness that shines out in the Church in all the ages and found a unique witness, in the 16th century, in St Anthony Mary Zaccaria. I also hope that you will faithfully follow in his footsteps, with those who work with you and with the entire spiritual family of St Anthony Mary Zaccaria. He brought countless souls to the "knowledge of the love of Jesus Christ", inspiring a variety of charisms in the consecrated life. He constantly pointed out the goal of holiness, not only to his religious who had set out on the path of spiritual "reform" or "renewal", but to all the faithful, whom he reminded of their call to become "not small ... but great saints" (*Lett. XI*).

The celebrations of the fifth centenary of the founder's birth afford a valuable opportunity to look more closely at the timeliness of his Message. I am sure that reflection on his burning love for Jesus, "exalted on the Cross and concealed beneath the veils of the Eucharist", and his unflagging zeal for souls will impel his spiritual sons to devote themselves with renewed enthusiasm to the human and Christian education of the young generations, who represent the future of the Church and of society as a whole.

2. In pursuing this objective, St Anthony Mary Zaccaria was inspired by the Apostle of the Gentiles. He therefore liked to call himself "Priest of the Apostle Paul". This was the model he held up to the religious families and the lay movement he founded. He liked to recommend to his followers: "*So be sure and certain that you will build on the foundations of Paul, not on hay nor on wood, but on gold and pearls, and the heavens and their treasures will be open above you and yours*" (*Lett. VI*).

At the school of St Paul he learned the fundamental rule of spiritual life, understood as "growth from one moment to the next" (*Lett. X*), until the stature of the perfect man in Christ is attained, by constantly laying aside the old man and putting on the new, in justice and in holiness (cf. Eph 4,22-24).

Throughout his life he had to face obstacles and persecution, but he always showed indomitable courage and trust in the Lord. Today these same sentiments must nourish all the members of his spiritual family. Indeed, if you are to continue putting the riches of your pedagogical tradition at the service of young people, their families and society, with the courage that is born of love, you must face the difficult situation of many of your worthy and age-old educational institutions.

Moreover, it is necessary to dedicate yourselves with special zeal to the Christian formation of the new generations, through the preaching of God's Word, regular and devout celebration of the sacraments, especially Reconciliation, spiritual direction, retreats and spiritual exercises. All these features which have made up a special feature of the Barnabite charism from the outset, demand of the Clerics Regular of St Paul an apostolic zeal that is bold and constant. The People of God have a greater need than ever for authoritative guides and givers of abundant spiritual sustenance, to enable them to accept and live the "high standard of ordinary Christian living" through an appropriate "training in holiness" (cf. *Novo Millennio ineunte*, n. 31).

3. The founder's words and example continue to impel his sons towards renewed fidelity to the missionary drive that is nourished by fervent prayer and based on a sound theological and cultural formation. Only in this way, in fact, is it possible to take an effective proclamation and a credible witness of the Gospel everywhere (cf. *Novo Millennio ineunte*, nn. 42-57), and contribute to the far-reaching action of the new evangelization which involves the whole of the ecclesial community.

May this praiseworthy congregation, drawing on the founder's rich spiritual heritage, walk the path of God with determination (cf. *Serm. VI*), to bring "spiritual vitality" (*Lett. V*) to the Christian people.

Do not be afraid, dear brothers and sisters, to openly combat mediocrity, compromise and every kind of apathy, which the holy founder described as "a plague and the greatest enemy of the crucified Christ, which is so widespread in modern times" (*Lett. V*). May each one take pains to make fruitful the gifts he has received and to persevere in prayer and in works of love, keeping confidence in divine Providence alive in all circumstances.

4. St Anthony Mary Zaccaria was not only concerned constantly to remind lay people of the universal call to holiness, but sought to involve them in evangelization. As you imitate his example, dear Barnabites, together with the Angelicals and the lay movement of St Paul, do not hesitate to encourage all who feel called to witness to your founder's charism in different social settings. In addition, promote an attentive and updated recruitment of vocations to accompany and sustain the persons the Lord calls to consecrated life.

In this way the three branches of the spiritual family, which St Anthony founded to follow in the footsteps of St Paul after his example, will grow in communion of mind and heart, and will be able once again to present the path of holiness to the men and women of our time with ever new zeal. May the Lord, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin for whom St Anthony Mary Zaccaria had a tender and faithful devotion, awaken in each member of this institute the enthusiasm and courage of goodness at the service of God and of our needy brothers and sisters.

With these vows I cordially impart a special Blessing to you, Reverend Father, to your Barnabite confreres, to the Angelicals and to the members of the lay movement of St Paul, that will favour graces and renewed spiritual and apostolic zeal.

From the Vatican, 5 July 2002.

IOANNES PAULUS II