



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MANTELLATE SISTERS, SERVANTS OF MARY**

Monday, 5 January 1998

Dear Sisters,

1. I welcome you with joy, while you are gathered in Rome for the General Chapter of your Congregation. I thank the Superior General, Sr Luisa Giuliani, for the words she addressed to me on behalf of you all, and I extend to her my wishes that she will be able to fulfil with generosity and abundant fruits the office in which she has been reconfirmed.

Your meeting, dear sisters, almost coincides with the liturgical season of Christmas, a time which is very advantageous for reviewing every experience in the light of faith and, following the example of the Virgin Mary, for meditating on God's plan, our vocation and the mission which he entrusts to us.

Your religious family is named after the Mother of God, and from her I especially ask you to learn ever more deeply the virtue of discernment, in complete docility to the action of the Holy Spirit, to whom this year is dedicated in preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000.

2. The theme of this Chapter - "With Mary, the new Woman, in the service of God in one's brothers and sisters" - also invites you to start out again towards a new stage in your journey under the guidance of the one who is the model of consecration and discipleship in the spirit of evangelical radicalism (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata*, n. 28).

Your reflection, based on the charism that marks the identity of the institute, stressed the importance of continuing formation and highlighted the demands of your mission in the areas of education, health care and pastoral service.

With regard to continuing formation, I would like to recall the *primacy of life in the Spirit*. "Living in the Spirit, consecrated persons discover their own identity and find profound peace; they grow more attentive to the daily challenges of the Word of God, and they allow themselves to be guided by the original inspiration of their institute. Under the action of the Spirit, they resolutely keep times

for prayer, silence and solitude, and they never cease to ask the Almighty for the gift of wisdom in the struggles of everyday life (cf. *Wis* 9:10)" (*Vita consecrata*, n. 71).

3. Your meeting is formulating basic guidelines for the life of each religious and for each community: first of all, following the example of the Mother Foundresses, the commitment to renewing your "being" and your "serving"; then, the awareness of the need to put Christ always at the centre of your lives, as well as constantly to renew and strengthen your bonds of communion; finally, as regards the apostolate, the guideline of choosing to "humanize life" in the various areas of your service: schools, foster-homes, hospitals, homes for the elderly, centres for responding to various forms of marginalization.

I can only encourage you to continue with renewed enthusiasm in these activities which the Holy Spirit suggests to you at such an important moment in the institute's life, such as this celebration of the General Chapter: open your hearts to receive the interior movements of God's grace.

4. Your visit, dear sisters, offers me the opportunity to express my gratitude and appreciation for your commitment and to confirm you in your intentions. You are well aware of how much the Church esteems the consecrated life. Particular evidence of this was given by the Assembly of the Synod of Bishops dedicated to it, which was above all a unanimous thanksgiving for the great gift of the consecrated life. It is at the very heart of the Church and is a decisive element for her mission (cf. *ibid*, n. 3), to which it makes a specific contribution through the witness of a life given totally to God and to one's brothers and sisters (cf. *ibid*, n. 76).

With the maternal help of Mary most holy, may this be your personal task and that of your entire Congregation! With this wish, I cordially impart to you and to your sisters a special Apostolic Blessing.