



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER,
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PALLOTTINES***

Tuesday, 6 October 1998

Dear Priests and Brothers of the Society of the Catholic Apostolate,

1. I am pleased to welcome you to this special audience and, through you, to extend a cordial greeting to all the members of your institute, as well as to those in the Church who share the same charism of St Vincent Pallotti. For two weeks now you have been busy working at your General Assembly. This spiritual and ecclesial event is taking place in the second year of preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, dedicated to the Holy Spirit. Together with you, I invoke the divine Spirit to enlighten you in discerning the signs of the times and to help you maintain and develop the riches of your charism in our day.

You have fittingly wanted your assembly discussions to focus on the subject of fidelity, expressed in the saying: "Faithful to the future ... looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of faith (Heb 12:2)". In fact, the theme expresses your desire to renew your fidelity to the apostolate, especially in view of the third millennium. This is a desire to be encouraged, remembering, however, that fidelity presupposes faith, on which the foundations of Christian life are based. Faith is the horizon for your spiritual and apostolic path. Indeed, it is Jesus who guides believers throughout their life, supporting them in their apostolic dedication and bringing all their good resolutions to fulfilment.

Dear friends, look with hope to the future and accept the challenges of the third millennium with confidence, knowing that Christ is beside you and is the same "yesterday and today and for ever" (Heb 13:8). He gives you his Spirit, who can guide you to the fullness of truth and love. May Christ be the reason for your hope: with him you will have nothing to fear, for he is the indestructible mainstay of all human life.

2. To live the faith means to share in Christ's life. In Jesus we can discover our true nature and fully appreciate our personal dignity. Proclaiming Christ so that the image of God may be restored to each person in all its fullness is the ultimate goal of the "new evangelization". You, called in a particular way by your charism to revive faith and rekindle love in every situation, should be very clearly aware of the preferential option for the "image of God" that is waiting to be revealed in the life of every brother and sister. Recognize Christ's face in everyone, appreciating every human being regardless of his condition or status.

This is what St Vincent Pallotti did, whose sole concern was the interior renewal of human beings for the sake of their sanctification. To imitate his apostolic zeal, you must first strive for personal holiness. Only in this way will you be able to foster it in others, by remembering the universal call to holiness clearly made by the Second Vatican Council. It is this awareness that must motivate your contribution to the work of the new evangelization. In this way you will be effectively prepared to enter the new millennium and will actively co-operate in fulfilling the mission that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ entrusted to the entire ecclesial community.

3. The commitment to personal holiness must be lived within your communities in the various parts of the world: work in unity and harmony to be authentic witnesses to the Gospel for those you meet in your daily ministry. In the Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata* I wrote: "The Church entrusts to communities of consecrated life the particular task of spreading the spirituality of communion, first of all in their internal life and then in the ecclesial community, and even beyond its boundaries, by opening or continuing a dialogue in charity, especially where today's world is torn apart by ethnic hatred or senseless violence" (n. 51). It is by witnessing to the fraternal life, understood as a life shared in love, that you become an eloquent sign of ecclesial communion (cf. *ibid.*, n. 42).

This deep understanding among yourselves will help you live your "unity in Christ" and make you ready and willing to respond to each person's spiritual and material needs. In this regard your founder loved to say over and over that "the gift of cooperating in the salvation of souls is one of the most divine" (*Opere complete XI*, p. 257). This gift should be shared with lay people, your daily co-workers in the apostolate, as well as within your institute. Involve them and welcome them into your life of communion. "Today", I wrote in the above-mentioned Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata* "many institutes have come to the conclusion that their charism can be shared with the laity" (n. 54). "The participation of the laity often brings unexpected and rich insights into certain aspects of the charism, leading to a more spiritual interpretation of it and helping to draw from it directions for new activities in the apostolate" (n. 55). In this way, the Society of the Catholic Apostolate, conceived and founded by St Vincent Pallotti, will allow you not only to co-ordinate the different resources of your communities, but also to be at the very heart of the Church's apostolic mission in today's world.

May you find help in Mary, faithful and obedient handmaid of the Lord and an excellent example of

fidelity to the apostolate. United in prayer with the disciples in the Upper Room of Jerusalem while awaiting the gift of the Holy Spirit, she offers you the example of constant prayer, willingness and active commitment to the Church's mission. May God renew the marvels of Pentecost in you and in your institute through her motherly intercession.

As I again express my appreciation of your apostolic service to the Church, I cordially impart a special Apostolic Blessing to you, which I willingly extend to all the members of the Pallottine communities.

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