



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MISSIONARIES OF INFINITE LOVE**

Friday, 4 September 1998

Dear Missionaries of Infinite Love,

1. Welcome to this meeting, which you desired in order to mark the *50th anniversary of the foundation* of your secular institute. I extend my cordial greeting to each of you, with a special mention of fraternal affection for Bishop Luigi Bettazzi, who is accompanying you. He rightly wished to join you today as Bishop of the particular Church where the foundation took place, that is, the Diocese of Ivrea. In fact, the Work of Infinite Love originated in that land, made fertile at the beginning of this century by the witness of the Servant of God Mother Luisa Margherita Claret de la Touche, and it was from this work that your family was founded. Having obtained diocesan recognition in 1972, the institute was later approved by me for the whole Church. It is now present, in fact, in various parts of the world.

Your basic sentiment in celebrating this anniversary is certainly one of thanksgiving, in which I am very pleased to join.

2. Dear friends, we are living in a year that is entirely dedicated to the Holy Spirit. Well, is the coincidence that you are celebrating the institute's 50th anniversary in the year dedicated to the Holy Spirit not another special reason for gratitude? It is only *because of the Spirit and in the Spirit* that we can say: "God is love" (1 Jn 4: 8;16), a statement that constitutes the inexhaustible core, the well-spring of your spirituality. Who reveals to men this fundamental Gospel truth, the synthesis of all Christian belief, if not the One who "searches everything, even the depths of God" (1 Cor 2:10) and reminds the disciples of all that Christ taught (cf. Jn 14:26)?

"It can be said that in the Holy Spirit the intimate life of the Triune God becomes totally gift, an exchange of mutual love between the divine Persons, and that through the Holy Spirit God exists in the mode of gift. It is the Holy Spirit who is the personal expression of this self-giving, of this being-love. He is Person-Gift" (Encyclical Letter *Dominum et Vivificantem*, n. 10).

3. The Church exists and is sent into the world to proclaim this truth, the principle of salvation and hope for all men: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). The Christian message of love, as Christ revealed it and transmitted it to the Church, can only be proclaimed in the form of witness. The whole Church, in the fullness and variety of her members, is involved in this work of evangelization, of which the Holy Spirit is the principal agent (cf. *Tertio millennio adveniente*, n. 45).

He, "who wondrously fashions the variety of charisms, has given rise in our time to *new expressions of consecrated life*, which appear as a providential response to the new needs encountered by the Church today as she carries out her mission in the world. One thinks in the first place of members of *secular institutes*" (*Vita consecrata*, n. 10), in one of which the Lord has also called you to live, dear sisters.

Therefore be "a leaven of wisdom and a witness of grace" in ecclesial, professional and social life, through your "specific blending of presence in the world and consecration", which "makes present in society the newness and power of Christ's kingdom" (*ibid.*). I also encourage you to continue the valuable service that you offer to priests through your prayer and collaboration.

In contemplating the sublime figure of Mary most holy, in whom every state of life in the Church recognizes its own perfect model, we can also see the features of women's Gospel involvement in the world. May the Holy Spirit, who leads us into the fullness of truth (cf. Jn 16:13), lead each of you and the whole institute in the Blessed Virgin's footsteps to become ever more and ever better missionaries of God's infinite love.

May you be accompanied in this journey by my Apostolic Blessing, which I cordially impart to you.

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