



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE OBLATES OF THE SACRED HEART

Saturday 15 September 2001

Dear Oblates of the Sacred Heart,

1. It gives me great joy to meet with you in the context of the solemn celebrations for the centenary of the birth of your Founder, the Servant of God Don Francesco Mottola. A generous and enlightened priest of your dear Diocese, he left a lasting impression on the ecclesial life and on the cultural and social context in which he lived spreading the influence of his apostolic action beyond the confines of Calabria.

I greet Bishop Domenico Cortese of Mileto-Nicotera-Tropea and I thank him for his kind words which conveyed the sentiments of all, recalling well the figure and the spiritual message of Don Mottola. I extend this affectionate thought to you, brothers and sisters, members of the great Oblate Family. To those of you who are present, as well as to all the spiritual sons and daughters of the Servant of God, I wish to extend my greeting, with a great appreciation for your generous evangelical witness, especially with the poor and needy.

2. As your Bishop rightly highlighted, the key word of the life, spirituality and pastoral and charitable action of Don Mottola is "*oblation*". Gifted with a vivacious and sensitive personality, he took up a demanding asceticism from the first years of priestly formation, nourished by daily prayer, to dominate his exuberant character and identify himself ever more with Christ. In his rule of life he wrote: "The pivotal centre of my spiritual life will be complete and absolute abandonment in the Heart of Jesus". This total entrustment to Christ finds its centre and its essence in the Eucharist and is lived as an "*oblation*" without reserve to God and for the brethren.

In his experience Don Mottola draws from this premise a harmonious balance between contemplation and action, which are inseparable, according to the known principle: "*Contemplan-*

et contemplata aliis tradere". The Virgin Mary is the model of this spiritual journey. Your Founder turned to her with filial confidence, imitating her in "contemplation" and in "service", and proposing this perfect integration to his Oblates as a true "social holiness", an effective type of apostolate for our times. This high spirituality, which does not renounce the primacy of contemplation, spurs you to live the evangelical counsels in the world. It welcomes the needs of the brethren, and is sure to be full of initiatives and activities on behalf of the poor and needy. I sincerely hope that the centenary celebrations will be a strong stimulus for all of you to deepen and share the treasure of spirituality and apostolate that this beloved Servant of God passed on to you.

3. I particularly want to address you, dear *Priests of the Sacred Heart*, who live your identity as diocesan priests in the spirit and with the ideals of Don Mottola. Spread the great values entrusted to you by your founder with your personal testimony and apostolate. Know yourselves to be, to use his lively image, the "cenobites" of the street. He loved to repeat: "The apostolate - for which we have refused the [monastic] cell and have remained travellers in the world - is born of the fullness of contemplation: just as from the snowy peaks the rivers flow down, which though they return to the sea, long for the blue sky, in order to be drawn up to the sun".

I address a word of affection and encouragement also to you, dear *Oblates of the Sacred Heart*. Following the teachings of Don Mottola, you express your total self-giving to God and to your suffering brothers and sisters. You do not do so in the solitude of the cloister but in the often hectic life of the world, harmonizing prayer and action, the search for God and the witness of charity.

Love and preserve jealously your charism for the good of the Church and of society. Your founder reminds you that you must "tend towards spiritual perfection through contemplative prayer and the apostolate: to remain in the world to be more ready to recognize the voice of sorrow and solitude".

You too, dear *Lay Oblates*, know that you are witnesses of that contemplation to which every Christian, young person or adult, celibate or married, is called according to the duties of his state.

Strong in this spirituality, you will be able to renew your surroundings through timely initiatives of prayer, as for example the "Venerdì di Corello" (Friday's of Corello), and the civil and social commitment, as you are already doing to support many unemployed youth.

My thoughts go, finally, to the *Consecrated of the Sacred Heart*. I exhort you to live the Oblate charism in your gift to the Lord and to the brethren, generously collaborating in the life and activity of the parish community and accompanying families, to favour "the return of Christ to families".

4. Dear brothers and sisters, your spiritual family, although formed by particular groups, lives in a constant communion of ideals and fosters shared initiatives. Go forward with generosity and farsightedness in this truly evangelical and ecclesial path!

May the example of your founder encourage you. He was always ready to follow Christ, even when he had to face long years of sickness, a real calvary that perfected his conformity to Christ Crucified. "*Usque ad sanguinem!*" (Even to the shedding of your blood), he used to say. The physical immobility did not stop him, but made the rays of his influence more intense and effective, deeply touching consciences and leaving a spiritual heritage that today is still bearing fruit.

I entrust you to the maternal intercession of Our Lady of Romania, the special Patron of Tropea, loved and venerated by Don Mottola with filial affection, and I impart a special Apostolic Blessing to you present here, to all the Oblates of the Sacred Heart and to all those you will meet in your daily service.