



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE CAPUCHIN SISTERS
OF BLESSED FRANCESCA RUBATTO**

Thursday, 7 February 2002

Dear Capuchin Sisters of Mother Rubatto!

1. I am happy to meet you at the end of your General Chapter. I greet you wholeheartedly, especially Mother General and the Sisters who with her are involved in the complex work of the governance and direction of your Congregation. I cordially greet all the religious who are occupied all over the world, and spread the good seed of the Gospel with plenty of apostolic and educational activities and closeness to the people, following the Franciscan and Capuchin charism of your Congregation.

In these days you have reflected on your identity and mission, in order to direct the whole institute towards new apostolic ventures. I genuinely hope that, as a result of the deliberations of the Chapter, a renewed zeal for your spirituality and your mission will flourish, on the firm foundations of the original intuition of your Foundress.

2. The life of Mother Francesca Rubatto, whom I had the joy of beatifying on 10 October 1993, was founded on two great pillars: ardent love for God, whom she perceived as her "Supreme Good" (cf. *St Francis of Assisi, Lodi di Dio Altissimo*, 5: *Fonti Francescane*, 261), and tireless service to her brothers and sisters, especially the neediest and the most forgotten. Under the guidance of enlightened spiritual directors, your Mother followed the example of St Francis and St Clare to be a humble but eloquent sign of the Gospel lived "*sine glossa*" (directly without commentary) (cf. *Legenda perugina*, 69.113: *Fonti Francescane*, 1622.1672).

As his spiritual daughters, may you too know how to make yourselves poor in your personal lives and your daily activities, choosing the last place, in simplicity and lowliness, and serving the

brethren with Franciscan joy. In this way you will be missionary sisters of the people, given over to proclaiming and witnessing to the Gospel to all whom you meet on your path.

Apostolic activity and service to the brothers and sisters will need a great abundance of love, that draws its life from intimate union with God, nourished by prayer and, in particular, by familiarity with Jesus in the Eucharist. Mother Francesca had a living and warm-hearted faith in Jesus present in the Blessed Sacrament, and wanted the Eucharist to be the heart of the religious family she founded. United with Christ in the offering of his life, she expressed her participation in the Easter Mystery through the total gift of herself to her neighbour.

Following the example of your Blessed Foundress, may you too know how to break the bread of your life as consecrated persons in the various kinds of service to your neighbour: from catechesis to education, from nursing the sick to solidarity with the needy, from collaboration in parish pastoral care to the mission *ad gentes*.

In the face of the new challenges, revive the fundamental inspiration of Mother Francesca, taking it into the new apostolic settings that open before you, supported by her burning love for God and her availability for the needs of others.

3. Above all, may you know how to keep intact your lifestyle, as it was regularly set forth by your Foundress. She wrote to a group of novices about the spirit that should motive a Capuchin sister: "Serve the Lord joyfully, lovingly fulfil the duties entrusted to you, work tirelessly because you know how precious your work is in the sight of the Lord. And having worked hard for the glory of God whom you love so deeply, call yourself a useless servant of the Lord and be convinced of being one, because you know that you are not capable of anything without his divine help" (*To the Novices of Montevideo and Rosario: Letters*, Genoa 1995, p. 550).

Serve the brethren without conditions or limits: this is what impelled Bl. Francesca Rubatto to open her heart and the life of the institute to the missionary dimension, that she recognized "as a special grace granted to our community" (*To Sr Felicita: op. cit.*, p. 129). This same spirit inspired the missionary sisters, who on 13 March 1901, gave witness, even to the supreme sacrifice of their lives, to their fidelity to Christ and to their generous love for their neighbour on the mission of Alto Alegre in Brazil.

May their example move you to intensify your effort to live your charism ever more in new choices of life and apostolic activity. For my part, I gladly assure you of my spiritual closeness, as well as wholehearted support and prayer.

May the intercession of Francis and Clare of Assisi assist you. May the host of Capuchin saints, among whom Bl. Francesca Rubatto shines with a special light, protect you. May my Blessing, which I cordially impart to you and to all your religious communities in Italy and throughout the

world go with you.

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