



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE CATHOLIC APOSTOLATE

*To Sister Stella Holisz
Superior General
The Missionary Sisters of the Catholic Apostolate*

With great affection in the Lord, I send greetings to you and all the Missionary Sisters of the Catholic Apostolate on the occasion of your Fifteenth General Chapter during which you will reflect on the theme: “*Rekindle your first love - respond to the challenges of today*”. Assuring you of my prayers for the success of your gathering, I give thanks to the Lord for your dedication to his Kingdom. Guided by the Holy Spirit and inspired by the example of Saint Vincent Pallotti, I am confident that your Chapter will be a source of encouragement for all the Sisters to renew their commitment to witness to the inseparable unity of love of God and love of neighbour (cf. *Vita Consecrata*, 63).

Your vocation as missionaries, patterned on the lives of the Apostles, eloquently shows that the more one lives in Christ the better one serves him in others, going even to the furthest missionary outposts and facing the greatest dangers (cf. *ibid.*, 76). The firm commitment to make Christ known and loved has its sublime origin in the “fountain-like love” of the Father made present in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit (cf. *Ad Gentes*, 2). Drawn up into Christ’s impelling love, you cannot but speak (cf. *Acts* 4:20) of this source of the hope and joy that kindled your first response to the call of the Lord and which has continued to strengthen you in the life of apostolic service to others.

In a world where the shadows of poverty, injustice, and secularism are cast over every continent, the need for authentic disciples of Jesus Christ remains as urgent as ever. It is precisely witness to Christ’s Gospel that dispels the darkness and illuminates the way of peace, fostering hope in the hearts of even the most marginalized and dejected of people. The men and women you encounter

from many religions, cultures, and social groups searching for meaning and dignity in their lives can never have their longings fulfilled by some vague religiosity. It is only by joyful fidelity to Christ and by a bold proclamation of him as Lord – a testimony founded on his command to *go and make disciples of all nations* (cf. *Mt 28:19*) – that you can assist others to come to know him. In so doing you will experience the full beauty and fruitfulness of your missionary vocation.

Dear Sisters, the Church looks to you to “speak” of Christ to those whom you serve and to “show” him to them (cf. *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 16). Such witness demands that you yourselves first contemplate the face of Christ. Your initial and ongoing formation programmes must therefore assist all the Sisters to conform themselves totally to Christ and his love of the Father. For this formation to be truly Christian, each aspect of it must rest upon a profound spiritual foundation which shapes the life of each Sister. In this way you will not only continue to “see” God with the eyes of faith but will also be effective in making his presence “perceptible” to others through the example of your own lives (cf. *Vita Consecrata*, 68) – lives marked by the zeal and compassion for the poor so readily associated with your beloved founder.

Invoking upon you the intercession of Saint Vincent Pallotti, the anniversary of whose *dies natalis* occurs today, and the protection of your Patron, Mary, Queen of the Apostles, I gladly impart to you and to all the Missionary Sisters of the Catholic Apostolate my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 22 January 2004

JOHN PAUL II