



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE MISSIONARIES OF MARIANNHILL

Dear Missionaries of Mariannhill,

I greet you with affection in the Lord on the occasion of your General Chapter, and I extend my warm encouragement to the newly elected Superior General, Father Dieter Gahlen. At the beginning of the Third Christian Millennium, the Congregation of the Missionaries of Mariannhill, as the Church in general, is challenged to *start afresh from Christ* (cf. *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, ch. III). In accordance with the theme chosen for your General Chapter, "Revisiting our identity and spirituality as a new era dawns", your path into the future is the path of a genuine renewal of your consecrated life, in a new season of spiritual and apostolic growth (cf. *Starting Afresh from Christ*, 19).

Your Congregation is the fruit of the many gifts bestowed by God on your founder, Abbot Franz Pfanner. These gifts continue to shape your Community and, as I invited Institutes of Consecrated Life in my Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, you too are called "to propose anew the enterprising initiative, creativity and holiness" of your founder "in response to the signs of the times emerging in today's world" (No. 37). In fact, it is only in renewed faithfulness to your founding charism that your Congregation will be enabled to face confidently the mission of proclaiming the saving message of the Gospel to an increasingly globalized world which in many ways is troubled by a "crisis of meaning" and by "ambiguous thinking" (*Fides et Ratio*, 81).

It is for this reason that Jesus' words to Peter to "put out into the deep" ("*Duc in altum*", Lk 5:4) must ring out for you too in your lives as missionaries. In the new era that is unfolding, you must be true missionaries and true saints, for holiness is at the very heart of your vocation (cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, 90). As your founder knew, holiness must be actively sought and prayed for. He underlined this in his motto: *Currite Ut Comprehendatis* — "straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (*Phil* 3:13-14). Abbot Pfanner, a man on fire for the building of the Kingdom, a man who courageously

persevered in the face of obstacles, beckons you to "go forward in hope" (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 58) as you respond to God's call in Christ Jesus.

In fidelity to the Benedictine-Trappist tradition on which your consecrated life is founded, your missionary apostolate will flourish and produce fruit to the degree that it is firmly rooted in the tenet "*Ora et Labora*". In this way too, you will achieve what is described in your *Instrumentum Laboris* as "the equilibrium of the contemplative missionary, the witness who remains immersed in prayer even while grappling with his urgent active commitment". I urge you therefore to intensify your formation in this crucial aspect of your vocation. Prayer and contemplation cannot be taken for granted. Prayer has to be learned in order that we may converse with Christ as intimate friends (cf. *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 32), and daily contemplation of the face of Christ will strengthen within you the reality of your consecration.

My dear Brothers in Christ, in a world where the human drama is too often marked by poverty, division and violence, the following of Christ demands that consecrated persons respond courageously to the Spirit's call to a *continual conversion*, in order to give new vigour to the prophetic dimension of their vocation (cf. *Starting Afresh from Christ*, 1). As missionaries, your witness to Christ means taking up the Cross out of love for the Lord and for your fellow human beings. This is the heart of all authentic proclamation of the Gospel. The Church counts on your commitment and on your enthusiasm for the mission *ad gentes*, confident that you will contribute thereby "in a particularly profound way to the renewal of the world" (*Vita Consecrata*, 25).

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, your patroness, the one who presented Christ as the Light of the Nations, continue to be your guide in all your missionary endeavours. May her mother Ann, to whom you have been devoted from the beginning, together with the host of witnesses of your own Institute, protect and encourage you on your journey to holiness. Assuring you of a remembrance in my prayers, I gladly impart to all the Missionaries of Mariannahill my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 26 October 2002

IOANNES PAULUS II