



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE APOSTLES OF THE SACRED HEART**

Friday, 2 January 1998

Dear Sisters,

1. I am pleased to welcome you at this solemn and important moment in your process of discernment. You are celebrating an Extraordinary Congress, during which you intend to update your Constitutions. This initiative is in response to the Church's invitation to maintain the vitality and timeliness of the meaning of your consecration, its value for the new evangelization and for an ever more effective witness to God's love for mankind.

I greet the General President, Miss Nidia Colussi, together with the Council and the other persons responsible for the Apostles of the Sacred Heart Secular Institute. I also greet the priests who assist them and the delegates from the various Italian provinces and from Latin America.

2. You have met to reflect on the path traveled thus far and to plan the next stages. The Sacred Heart of Jesus, placed at the centre of your spirituality, shows you the high road to a witness that is humble and often ignored by men, but precious and appreciated in the eyes of God. You wish to participate in the apostolic mission of the Lord: it is not by chance that you call yourselves "Apostles of the Sacred Heart"!

Look then to him: he "delivered himself" (*tradidit semetipsum*) for the life of the world. He willingly obeyed the Father until death, death on a cross, so that the new life of God's children might triumph in history. Thus you too are called to be the leaven of liberation and salvation for mankind and all creation (cf. *Rom 8:18-21*), by sharing from within, in your secular condition, the living situation of your many brothers and sisters.

3. I would like to make three recommendations to you, recommendations that are also the reason for my prayer for you and for your institute.

In the first place, I urge you always to maintain *the spirit of simplicity* that your founder taught with such insistence. Charity, the ineffable gift of the Holy Spirit, finds in humility its necessary foundation and the possibility of its maximum

expression.

I urge you then to continue your *valuable service of support*, prayer and active concrete assistance to vocations of special consecration. I particularly entrust you with priestly vocations: may they be present in your spirit and your apostolic hearts as the first and most important gift you can help implore and obtain for the Church from the mercy of God, the Lord of the harvest (cf. *Mt 9:38*).

Finally, I hope that where you live and work you will continue to be that successful *leaven of Gospel witness* that your choice of secular consecration demands.

4. In entrusting you with these thoughts, I invoke on your persons, on your loved ones and on the entire Institute of the Apostles of the Sacred Heart the constant assistance of the Lord, so that, scattered like little seeds throughout the world, without giving in to its allurements, you may be for everyone who approaches you an occasion for meeting Jesus and the inexhaustible wealth of love that flows from his blessed Heart.

May the Blessed Virgin, whom you venerate with the beautiful title of Mother of Good Counsel, watch over you. With these wishes I impart to each of you my special Blessing as a pledge of every heavenly grace.

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