



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO THE BARNABITES

Saturday, 8 July 2000

Dear Clerics Regular of St Paul!

1. I am pleased to meet you on the occasion of your institute's General Chapter. This is an event of grace which is a powerful call for you to explore the authentic roots of your congregation, to reflect on your specific charism and to try to discern the most suitable ways to live it in today's sociocultural context.

I greet the Superior General and his Council, as well as the delegates to the Chapter meeting. I extend my cordial greeting to all the Barnabites, who are carrying out their generous apostolate in Italy, Europe, Africa, America and Asia. In these days of intense assembly work, you are reflecting on the stimulating theme "*Looking to the Future*". Faithful to your charism, you intend to keep St Paul's teaching alive and active in the third millennium, at the service of the Church and humanity.

I encourage you in your intentions. Joyfully reaffirm your fidelity to the spiritual heritage of your founder, St Anthony Mary Zaccaria, whose liturgical memorial we celebrated last Wednesday. A priest rooted in God and at the same time enthusiastic about man, he lived a demanding spirituality based on the "folly of the Cross". He took the Apostle Paul as his teacher, model of life and guide in carrying out an apostolate of charity for the clergy and the entire Christian people. At a time of widespread laxity, St Anthony Mary Zaccaria revived the faith by fostering an intense life of inner renewal centred on the Crucified One and on devotion to the Eucharist, the heart of the Church's life. May his example encourage you to continue his mission, as effective today as it was then, because it aims at proclaiming and bearing witness to Christ, who died and rose for our salvation.

2. Dear brothers, in pointing out the ideal of religious and apostolic life to his spiritual sons, St

Anthony Mary Zaccaria emphasized charity, which alone is truly effective (cf. *Sermon IV*), adding that to attain the highest of the theological virtues it is necessary to advance in perfection according to three primary spiritual paths: the observance of the Commandments, the study of the Truth and the Gospel, and the proclamation of the Good News (*Constitutions VI*). The missionary spirituality of your religious family developed on the solid foundation of these concrete reference-points.

"Plants and pillars of Christian fervour" (*Letter VII*), the brothers who formed the first cenacle of ascetical and apostolic life inspired by Fr Anthony Mary at St Barnabas' Church in Milan, chose as their father and guide the Apostle to the Gentiles, and strove to put his doctrine and example into practice. They also committed themselves to reforming morals and devoted particular care to the education of young people in schools and recreational programmes.

On this same demanding and evangelically fruitful path, the Clerics Regular of St Paul still feel that they are being asked today to bear witness to the Gospel of love to their contemporaries. Love for Jesus, the "Crucified One who lives", and the desire to embrace everyone in charity without distinction spur them to seek, with prophetic freedom and wise discernment, new ways to be a living presence in the Church, in communion with the Pope and in collaboration with the Bishops.

3. Looking at the vast horizons of the new evangelization, we see an ever more urgent need to proclaim and bear witness to the Gospel message to everyone, without distinction. Thus the field of your apostolate is as vast as the world, and, as your holy founder urged, it must spread to where Christ "set the bounds" (*Letter VI*). Indeed, how many people are still waiting to know Jesus and his Gospel! How many situations of injustice, of moral and material hardship exist in so many parts of the world! But to carry out this urgent mission, it is indispensable for each of you, dear brothers, to encounter Christ every day in ceaseless and fervent prayer. Only in this way will you be able to show others the way that leads to him.

Strengthened by this interior conversation with the Lord, you will be able to work with him in saving souls and to meet the needs of the people in the spirit of the Apostle Paul, without fearing obstacles or difficulties.

4. In this regard, I have learned that your congregation is questioning itself with deep pain about your other primary apostolate, schools, which are going through a serious crisis in Italy. In recent years, you have unfortunately had to close prestigious educational institutes which formed the consciences of many young people by passing on to them high ideals of human and Christian living. I would like to urge you not to lose heart but to remain calm even in this painful trial, trusting in divine assistance and in your founder's support.

You belong to a religious institute with a great tradition of men who have served the Church in the most varied fields, frequently facing very difficult situations. We need only recall individuals such as St Alexander Sauli, confessor of St Charles Borromeo, and St Francis Xavier Bianchi, a disciple of St Alphonsus Mary de Liguori. Looking at the witness of these your confrères, who were faithful

disciples of Christ and generous Gospel workers, go forward with trust and intensify your apostolic zeal.

May the Immaculate Virgin protect and guide the way of your religious family, bringing all your good intentions to fulfilment.

With these wishes, I bless you affectionately, as I assure you of a remembrance in my prayer for each of you and for those you meet in your daily apostolic ministry.

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