



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE MISSIONARY OBLATES OF MARY IMMACULATE

Friday, 24 September 2004

Dear Friends,

1. On the occasion of the General Chapter of your Institute, I am pleased to welcome you and to assure you of my spiritual closeness in prayer. I greet in particular the Superior General and the members of the new General Council of the Congregation. I hope that their work will go well in this demanding office.

I thank you all for the affection you show to the Successor of Peter which I cordially reciprocate, also because of my devotion for your Founder, *St Eugène de Mazenod*, and my esteem for your Congregation which is both Marian and missionary.

2. "*Witnesses of hope*" is the motto of this Chapter Assembly which is in continuity with the previous one. Together with the whole Church, you have entered the new millennium in the sign of hope, and it is in this perspective that you desire to continue on your way, trusting in divine Providence. Your presence, enlivened by an authentic religious and missionary zeal, must be a *sign and seed of hope* for all those you meet, both in secularized milieus and in contexts where the Good News has not yet been proclaimed.

3. I encourage you to persevere in order to reach the *objectives* you have set for yourselves, and first and foremost, a *renewed fraternal union* in accordance with the wishes of the Holy Founder, who conceived of the Institute as a family and whose members form one heart and one mind. Today you are present with more than 1,000 communities in 67 countries of the world; this unity is a challenge that is demanding but so important for humanity, called to take the path of solidarity in diversity.

I also appreciate your reflection on the *profound changes* that are marking the Congregation, whose centre of gravity is moving toward the poorest areas of the world. This important fact is prompting you to update your formation, distribution of personnel and forms of governance and of the communion of goods.

May you be able to make *clear decisions on the basis of the priorities* of your mission. The prime requirements certainly include the permanent care of spiritual life for a constantly renewed fidelity to your original charism. Indeed, it is God with the action of the Holy Spirit who enables Religious Families to *respond adequately to new demands, drawing from the specific gift entrusted to them*.

4. For all these goals, I invoke from Heaven, through the intercession of Mary Most Holy, an abundance of light and strength. In particular, I ask her to watch over each one of you and over your confreres with maternal solicitude, and I wholeheartedly impart an Apostolic Blessing to you all.