



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE COMMUNITY OF THE CLOISTERED POOR CLARES
OF IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CONVENT IN ALBANO LAZIALE**

*Consistory Hall, Castel Gandolfo
Saturday, 15 September 2007*

Dear Sisters,

Welcome to the Apostolic Palace! I am very pleased to welcome you, I thank you for your visit, and I cordially greet each one of you. One could say that your Community, located in the territory of the Pontifical Villas, dwells in the shadow of the Papal home, hence, that the spiritual bond between you and the Successor of Peter is very close. This is demonstrated by the many contacts that you have had since your foundation with the Popes while they were staying here at Castel Gandolfo, as has just been mentioned by your Mother Abbess, whom I warmly thank for her kind words on behalf of you all. In meeting you this morning, I too would like to renew my deep gratitude to your Fraternity for your daily support of prayers and your intense spiritual participation in the mission of the Pastor of the universal Church.

In the silence of the cloister and in the total and exclusive gift of yourselves to Christ according to the Franciscan charism, you offer the Church a precious service. In reviewing the history of your Monastery, I noticed that a great many of my Predecessors, on meeting your Fraternity, always reaffirmed the importance of your witness as contemplatives "happy with God alone". In particular, I recall what the Servant of God Paul VI said to you on 3 September 1971: that in the face of those who consider cloistered people as out of touch with reality and the experience of our time, your existence has the value of a special witness which intimately affects the Church's life. "You represent", Paul VI stressed, "so many things that the Church appreciates and which Vatican II has confirmed. Faithful to the Rule, to common life, to poverty, you are a seed and a sign" (*Holy Father's Three Pastoral Visits*, 3 September 1971, *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition [ORE], 23 September, p. 2). As if continuing these reflections, a few years later, on 14 August 1979,

beloved John Paul II, in celebrating Holy Mass in your chapel, desired to entrust himself, the Church and the whole of humanity to your prayers. "You have not left the world", he observed, "because you did not want to bear the crosses of the world... you carry them all in your heart, and in the troubled scenario of history you accompany humanity with your prayer... Because of this presence of yours, hidden but authentic within society and even more so within the Church, I also look with confidence to your joined hands" (*Homily at Mass for Poor Clares and Basilian Sisters*, Albano, Italy, 14 August 1979; *ORE*, 27 August, p. 3).

So, dear Sisters, this is what the Pope expects of you: that you be bright torches of love, "joined hands", watching in ceaseless prayer, totally detached from the world, in order to sustain the ministry of the One whom Jesus has called to guide his Church. May you be "Poor Sisters" who, after the example of St Francis and St Clare, observe "the holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, without anything of one's own, and in chastity". The silent work of those who, like you, endeavour to live the Gospel "*sine glossa*" with simplicity and joy does not always echo in public opinion but - you may be certain - the contribution you make to the apostolic and missionary work of the Church in the world is truly extraordinary, and God will continue to bless you with the gift of many vocations as he has done thus far.

Dear Poor Clare Sisters, may St Francis, St Clare and the many Saints of your Order help you "persevere faithfully to the end" in your vocation. May you be especially protected by the Virgin Mary, whom today's liturgy presents to us for contemplation at the foot of the Cross, closely associated in Christ's mission and, as the Sorrowful Mother, a sharer in the work of salvation. On Calvary, Jesus gave her to us as Mother and entrusted us to her as children. May the Sorrowful Virgin obtain for you the gift of following her divine Crucified Son and of embracing serenely the difficulties and trials of daily life. With these sentiments, I impart to all of you a special Apostolic Blessing, which I willingly extend to those who commend themselves to your prayers.

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