



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE CONSOLATA MISSIONARY SISTERS

Monday, 5 July 1999 Dear Consolata Missionary Sisters,¹ I am pleased to address you who have come from various countries of Africa, America and Europe where your institute carries out its generous missionary work. In these days you have gathered together to celebrate your General Chapter and to reflect deeply as a community on the inspiring theme: "Charismatic choices urgently needed today for the vitality of our inculturated mission *ad gentes* at a time when numbers are decreasing". I affectionately greet you, dear capitulars, with a special thought and greeting for the sisters who have been entrusted with the service of authority for the good of the congregation. I then embrace in spirit all your sisters throughout the world and the persons to whom they devote their valuable evangelizing mission, as well as their generous witness of solidarity to our poorest and most neglected brothers and sisters.

2. The mission *ad gentes* expresses a constitutive element of the Church's nature. Looking to Christ who was "sent" by the Father for humanity's salvation (cf. *Tertio millennio adveniente*, n. 1), the Church feels the urgent need to continue the saving mission down through history, bringing the Good News to all peoples. In the past, consecrated persons have borne a shining witness to this missionary impulse, which is part of the inmost nature of Christian life. To

Today their contribution is more necessary than ever: vast numbers of people are still waiting to know Christ. This is what the Post-Synodal Exhortation *Vita consecrata* emphasized: "today too this duty continues to present a pressing call to institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life: they are expected to make the greatest possible contribution to the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ" (n. 78).

It is precisely this missionary impulse which shines out in the life and work of Bl. Giuseppe Allamano who, at the Shrine of the Consolata, wished to imbue his zeal for the salvation of his brethren with a universal dimension. For this purpose he founded two religious institutes of Consolata Missionaries at the very beginning of this century, inscribing in their specific charism the commitment to evangelization *ad gentes*.³ On the threshold of the third millennium, the mandate to proclaim Christ, the one Saviour of the world, to everyone is presented with renewed urgency. For this reason, dear Sisters, I encourage you to live your missionary vocation with dynamism and

generosity, impressing upon it forms suited to our time. In this effort of fidelity and renewal be guided by the example of your blessed founder, by the congregation's established missionary tradition and by the general guidelines which have resulted from your Chapter work.

I urge you to make the style of the new evangelization increasingly your own, following my instructions in the Encyclical *Redemptoris missio*. This will enable you to feel in full communion with the whole Church.

Be authentic missionaries through a convincing personal and community witness of consecrated life and a humble and respectful presence among the poorest and social minority groups, paying particular attention to families, women and young people. Proclaim God the Father's unconditional love for every person called to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ openly and courageously. Offer a generous example of solidarity, sharing in the life and progress of persons and peoples in their actual situations, in a spirit of dialogue attentive to the needs of inculturation. Combine Gospel proclamation with commitment to real human advancement and to complete freedom of the person from every form of violence and oppression, both physical and moral.⁴ In following your specific charism, may you be a presence of consolation, hope and peace. In this perspective, I congratulate you on your courageous choice of solidarity with peoples who, tried in various ways, often face situations of uncertainty and risk, and, at whose side you remain. The Consolata Missionary Sisters' presence in areas devastated by civil war or marked by intolerant integralism, where they make themselves the "voice of those who have no voice", is a clear witness of a life totally dedicated to serving God and their brothers and sisters. In this Chapter you wish to confirm your commitment to extend your missionary zeal to new places, especially on the Asian continent, to sow the seed of Gospel proclamation there. This is a praiseworthy decision which expresses the whole institute's desire to enter the third millennium renewed within, with a stronger awareness of the charism of your origins and ready to face the new challenges of "today's" mission in the Church and in the world. The Pope is with you and encourages you! I entrust the reflections and resolutions of the Chapter meeting to the motherly intercession of Mary, to whom your institute is particularly bound, and whom you call by the beautiful title of 'Consolata'. May the heavenly protection of your blessed founder help you to be dispensers of consolation and hope wherever Providence calls you to work for God's kingdom. May you also be accompanied by my Blessing, which I affectionately impart to you all and to your communities all over the world.