



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE BISHOPS, FRIENDS OF THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT
ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR ANNUAL MEETING**

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,

I am pleased to send you my cordial greeting on the occasion of the annual meeting of the Bishops Friends of the Focolare Movement, which is an appropriate time to reflect together on the spirituality of Mary's work.

I deeply appreciated the fact that for this meeting you decided to reflect upon and discuss the theme of holiness as a primary requirement to be proposed to all the members of the People of God. The Second Vatican Council recalled that holiness is the vocation of every baptized person. I stressed this same truth in my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* at the end of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. Indeed, only a Christian community that is shining with holiness can effectively carry out the mission that Christ has entrusted to it: to spread the Gospel to the very ends of the earth.

"*For the sanctity of people*": this specification puts the accent precisely on the universal character of the Church's vocation to holiness, a truth that is one of the pillars of *Lumen Gentium*, the Constitution of the Second Vatican Council. Two general aspects should be appropriately emphasized. First of all is the fact that the Church is profoundly holy and is called to live and express this holiness in each of her members. Secondly, the phrase "sanctity of people" suggests ordinary life, that is, the need for all the baptized to be able to live the Gospel consistently in their daily lives: in the family, at work, in every relationship and occupation. It is precisely in the ordinary that one must live the extraordinary, so that the "standard" of living is directed "high", that is, "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ", as the Apostle Paul teaches (cf. Eph 4: 13).

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, for whom I know you have a filial devotion, be the sublime model that always inspires you. She epitomizes the holiness of the People of God, for in her the perfection of the Christian vocation shines out in deepest humility. I entrust each one of you to her

motherly protection, dear and venerable Brothers, as I wish you every good for your Convention and cordially impart a special Apostolic Blessing to you all.

From the Vatican, 18 February 2004

JOHN PAUL II

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