



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
TO THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC,
MEXICO AND THE BAHAMAS

MEETING WITH THE WOMEN RELIGIOUS OF MEXICO

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Saturday, 27 January 1979

Beloved Religious Daughters of Mexico,

This meeting of the Pope with Mexican Sisters, which was to have been celebrated in the Basilica of Our Mother of Guadalupe, takes place here in her spiritual presence; before her, the perfect model of woman, the best example of a life dedicated entirely to her Son the Saviour, in a constant inner attitude of faith, hope, and loving dedication to a supernatural mission.

In this privileged place and before this figure of the Virgin, the Pope wishes to pass some moments with you, the many Sisters present here, who represent the more than twenty thousand scattered all over Mexico and outside their homeland.

You are a very important force within the Church and within society itself; spread in innumerable sectors such as the schools and colleges, the clinics and hospitals, the field of charity and welfare, parish works, catechesis, the groups of apostolate, and so many others. You belong to different religious families, but with the same ideal within different charisms: to follow Christ, to be a living witnesses to his everlasting message.

Yours is a vocation which deserves the highest esteem on the part of the Pope and the Church, yesterday as today. For this reason I wish to express to you my joyful confidence in you, and encourage you not to be discouraged along the way that you have undertaken, which is worth continuing with renewed spirit and enthusiasm. Be assured that the Pope accompanies you with

his prayer, and that he delights in your faithfulness to your vocation, to Christ and to the Church.

At the same time, however, allow me to add some reflections which I propose for your consideration and examination.

It is certain that a praiseworthy spirit of faithfulness to their own ecclesial commitment prevails in a good many Sisters, and that aspects of great vitality can be seen in religious life with a return to a more evangelical view, growing solidarity among religious families, greater closeness to the poor, who are given rightful priority of attention. These are reasons for joy and optimism.

But there are not lacking, either, examples of confusion with regard to the very essence of consecrated life and one's own charism. Sometimes prayer is abandoned and it is replaced by action; the vows are interpreted according to the secularizing mentality which dulls the religious motivations of one's own state; community life is abandoned with a certain irresponsibility; socio-political attitudes are adopted as the real aim to pursue, even with well-defined ideological radicalizations.

And when the certainties of faith are sometimes dimmed, motives are put forward such as the seeking of new horizons and experiences, perhaps with the pretext of being closer to men, maybe concrete groups, chosen with criteria that are not always evangelical.

Beloved Sisters: never forget that to maintain a clear concept of the value of your consecrated life you need a deep vision of faith, which is nourished and preserved with prayer (cf. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 6). This faith will enable you to overcome all uncertainty with regard to your own identity, and will keep you faithful to that vertical dimension which is essential for you in order to identify you with Christ from the beatitudes, and in order to be true witnesses to the Kingdom of God for men of the modern world.

Only with this concern for the interests of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 7:32) will you be capable of giving to the charism of prophecy its suitable dimension of witness to the Lord: without options for the poor and needy which do not spring from the criteria of the Gospel, but are inspired by socio-political motivation which—as I said recently to the Mothers Superiors General in Rome—turn out in the long run to be inopportune and self-defeating.

You have chosen as a way of life the pursuit of some values which are not merely human ones, although you must also esteem the latter in their rightful measure. You have opted for service of others for love of God. Never forget that the human being is not exhausted in the earthly dimension only. You as professionals of faith and experts in the sublime knowledge of Christ (cf. Phil 3:8), open them to the call and dimension of eternity in which you yourselves must live.

I would have many other things to tell you. Take as said to you what I indicated to the Mothers

Superiors General in my [address of 16 November](#) last. How much you can do today for the Church and for mankind! They are waiting for your generous commitment, the dedication of your free heart, expanding in an unsuspected way its potentialities of love in a world that is losing the capacity of altruism, self-sacrificing and disinterested love. Remember, in fact, that you are mystical brides of Christ and of Christ crucified (cf. 2 Cor 4:5).

The Church repeats to you today her trust: be living witnesses to this new civilization of love, which my predecessor Paul VI rightly proclaimed.

In order that strength from above may support you in this magnificent and hopeful enterprise, that it will keep you, in renewed spiritual youth faithful to these resolutions, I accompany you with a special Blessing, which I extend to all the Sisters in Mexico.

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