



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE WORLD CONGRESS OF THE APOSTLESHIP OF THE SEA

Wednesday, 27 October 1982

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

1. It gives me great pleasure to be with you today, as you take part in the World Congress of the Apostleship of the Sea. Your meeting bears witness to the deep pastoral concern which the Church has for the seafarers of the world and for their families. I am pleased that you have chosen as the theme of the Congress that very important moment in the whole process of evangelization which is known as catechesis; and in particular, that you have focused your attention on the *catechesis* of seafarers within the twofold context of their maritime life and their family life.

2. The Church wishes to bring all the baptized to a fuller and more systematic knowledge of *the person and message of Jesus Christ*. In fulfilling this mission to seafarers, you face a most challenging and difficult task. You are dealing with people who live in a dispersed milieu. They face painful problems, such as separation from family and friends, and the resulting feelings of isolation and loneliness; for extended periods of time they live and work at a great distance from a territorial parish. In a real sense, the seafaring world has become a missionary world.

Remember that you are not alone in this awesome task. The whole Church is one with you in solicitude and prayer. Furthermore, *the responsibility for catechesis* rests upon the entire people of God, working together with the hierarchy, in harmony and according to the diverse roles and gifts of each person. For this reason, I am very happy to see before me today men and women from round the world, Bishops and priests, religious and laity, all collaborating in the same important work for Jesus and the Gospel.

3. The *local Churches* have a special role to play in the pastoral care of seafarers and other

migrant groups. In this regard, I am pleased to see how some Episcopal Conferences and local Bishops, as well as some Institutes of men and women religious, have taken special initiatives to meet the new and urgent needs of our day. The responsibility for catechesis also rests upon believing seafarers themselves who, by reason of their Baptism have the privilege and duty of bringing their brothers and sisters to a deeper knowledge of Christ and to a closer intimacy with him. Great help is provided to them by “Stella Maris” seafarers’ reception centres and by the formation of Christian communities which are especially adapted to the mobility of the maritime world.

As you examine the problems and obstacles, and as you see more clearly the resources and means available for this vital work in the Church, may you be filled with *renewed courage and zeal*. May the Spirit of Truth and Love enlighten your minds and hearts and fill you with abiding hope. To all of you, to your families and friends, to your collaborators in your various countries, and especially to the men and women on the seas and oceans of the world who are one with us in Christ, I impart my Apostolic Blessing.

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