



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE GENERAL CHAPTERS OF THE
SISTERS OF SAINT FELIX OF CANTALICE
AND THE DAUGHTERS OF OUR LADY OF MERCY**

*Consistory Hall
Thursday, 6 June 2024*

[Multimedia]

Dear Sisters, good morning!

I welcome all of you, Sisters of Saint Felix of Cantalice, and Daughters of Our Lady of Mercy. Extending a special welcome to your Superiors General, I thank you for coming. You are gathered to celebrate your General Chapters, and it is heartening that, on this occasion, you have come to meet the Successor of Peter, in order to reaffirm your dedication to the service of God and the Church. Service is indeed a common element in your foundations, which took place in the same historical period of the nineteenth century, albeit in different circumstances.

During that time, Sofia Camilla Truszkowska, later known as Sister Angela Maria, founded the Sisters of Saint Felix of Cantalice in Warsaw, in a Poland troubled by war, to serve children, disabled persons, and young people at risk. What strikes us about these beginnings is the episode in which, faced with the escalation of armed conflicts, she and her sisters decided to care for all the wounded, regardless of their allegiance. This led to accusations of treason and the suppression of their work by the civil authorities. Providence, however, later intervened to revive and, perhaps thanks to their courageous sacrifice, to spread their apostolate even further, across the ocean to America, always driven by the impulse of service, this time for the assistance of Polish migrants. Since then, these efforts have extended to many other parts of the world. This is an important sign for you, especially as you celebrate the Chapter: a sign that invites you not to fear losing the security of structures and institutions, in order to remain faithful to charity! It will be

good for you to keep this in mind during your meetings, to remind yourselves that structures are not the essence, they are only a means. What is essential is the love of God and neighbour, exercised with generosity and in freedom, according to the words of Saint Paul that you have chosen as a guide for your work: “For the love of Christ urges us on” (2 Cor 5:14).

During the same period, in Savona, Italy, another young woman, Benedetta Rossello, later known as Sister Maria Giuseppa, began, under the guidance of her bishop, another work also in service of the poor, children, and young women: the Daughters of Our Lady of Mercy. Benedetta too was a determined young woman. Despite her impoverished background, she renounced the possibility of inheriting wealth in order to answer the call to a life of consecration, choosing the motto “Heart to God, hands to work!” She threw herself into this new adventure of love with humble but powerful resources: “a crucifix, a little statue of Our Lady Mother of Mercy, and five lire of capital,” always ready to serve in any capacity. Here, allow me to share with you a personal anecdote. It was in one of your schools, in Buenos Aires, in the Flores neighbourhood, that I received the Sacraments of Christian Initiation many years ago. How can I forget dear Sister Dolores, from whom I learned so much and whom I continued to visit for a long time afterwards? For this, I am deeply grateful to the Lord and to all of you, as my current service to the Church is also the fruit of the kindness I received, at a tender age, from your religious family.

Dear Sisters, see how we are all instruments in the wise hands of God! Who is able to imagine what the Lord will draw out from our small “yes”? In conclusion, then, I would like to encourage you to renew your adherence to his will, in fidelity to the vows you have professed and in docility to the action of the Spirit. Surrender yourselves to him and give everything, always, with generosity. I pray for you, and I ask you also, please, do not forget to pray for me! Thank you.