



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO DAUGHTERS OF ST ANNE**

Monday, 20 January 1997

1. I am pleased to address my cordial greetings to you and your sisters who have gathered in Rome, from the various parts of the world where this religious congregation is present, to take part in the *Elective General Chapter*, which is now reaching its conclusion.

First of all I would like to congratulate you, Reverend Mother, on your reelection to the office of Superior General. I extend my greeting to the religious who constitute the new General Council, to whom I offer my best wishes for generous and fruitful work in fostering the spiritual and apostolic progress of the entire institute. Finally, my affectionate greetings go to all the Daughters of St Anne who live and work in the various communities dispersed on different continents.

2. During the meetings of these busy days, which to a large extent have coincided with the liturgical season of Advent and Christmas, the Chapter delegates reflected with you, Reverend Mother, on the congregation's recent progress, studying the value of its works and pastoral and charitable commitments, in order to respond better to the institute's specific charism. I hope that the guidelines that have resulted from the chapter may instil renewed zeal in the life and activity of your religious family, especially in these years of immediate preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000.

In the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata*, I emphasized how, in the effort of discernment and community renewal, it is necessary to follow some basic criteria which, in particular, include fidelity to the original charism and attention to the new needs and forms of poverty of contemporary society: "For example, it is necessary to safeguard the significance of an institute's own charism, to foster community life, to be attentive to the needs of both the universal and particular Church, to show concern for what the world neglects, and to respond generously

and boldly to the new forms of poverty through concrete efforts” (n. 63).

3. In this commitment to renewal, every sister of the institute must be able to draw inspiration and strength from the rich spiritual heritage left by the foundress, Mother Rosa Gattorno. In her meeting with Pope Pius IX, she expressed her firm intention to fulfil faithfully the will of God in her life: “Yes, Holy Father, I want to do God's will”. Every Daughter of St Anne must make these words of the foundress her own, nourishing with prayer and an intense spiritual life the work of charity that she is called to offer to her brothers and sisters, and thus by her humble and faithful activity prepare for the coming of God's kingdom.

Our age is marked by renewed attention to the special role of the feminine vocation in the Church and in society. It is necessary that consecrated life in general, and individual institutes in particular, respond in a suitable way to the new challenges of today's culture. In this regard I am pleased to stress what I stated in the recent post-synodal document: “By virtue of their dedication lived in fullness and in joy, consecrated women are called in a very special way to be signs of God's tender love towards the human race and to be special witnesses to the mystery of the Church, Virgin, Bride and Mother” (*Vita consecrata*, n. 57).

4. I hope that under your enlightened guidance, Reverend Mother, the religious of this congregation will study with greater clarity their identity as women and as religious, making the most of the great potential of their feminine genius and putting it at the service of the welfare of their brothers and sisters, especially the materially and spiritually impoverished. I hope that each of you will live your vocation intensely, allowing yourselves to be won over by the love of God and effectively witnessing to his merciful presence at the side of every human being.

With these sentiments, as I invoke the heavenly protection of St Anne and the Virgin Mother of the Saviour, I cordially impart a special Apostolic Blessing to you, Reverend Mother, to the capitulars, to their respective communities and to the whole congregation.

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