



The Holy See

LETTER OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE MISSIONARIES OF THE SACRED HEART

To the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart

I am pleased to send you warm greetings on the happy occasion of the 150th Anniversary of the Foundation of your Institution. In fact, it was on 8 December 1854, the very day that my predecessor Bl. Pius IX proclaimed the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that your Society of Consecrated Life was born.

Your Founder, Fr Jules Chevalier, rightly regarded the establishment of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart as the fruit of the intercession of Mary. With great devotion to the Mother of God he had recourse to her in all the difficulties he faced, honouring her with the title "Our Lady of the Sacred Heart of Jesus".

As Jesus' mother, Mary knows his heart, she intercedes with him on our behalf and leads us to him, teaching us to live as she did, in the love of her Son, in the service of God's Word, with solicitous concern for others.

Fr Chevalier saw the Sacred Heart of Jesus as the meeting place between God and humankind. Indeed, it is from Jesus' heart that God's love is lavished upon men and women; it is in Jesus' heart that humanity is reconciled to God. Jesus invites us to a "spirituality of the heart" in imitation of his own surrender, obedience, courage, fidelity and love.

It is my fervent hope that you, dear Brothers, will continue to draw inspiration and strength from this spirituality and from your Founder's charism as you fulfil your vocation in the Church and in the world. "You have not only a glorious history to remember and to recount, but also a great history still to be accomplished! Look to the future, where the Spirit is sending you in order to do even greater things" (*Vita Consecrata*, n. 110).

May your Jubilee be an occasion of great joy and thanksgiving, and also an opportunity for deepening your commitment as Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to the glory of God and for the welfare of the entire human family.

Assuring you of my affection in the Lord and commending you always to the maternal protection of Mary Immaculate, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of grace and peace in our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

From Castel Gandolfo, 1 September 2004

JOHN PAUL II

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