



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

TO THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF SAINT PETER CLAVER Friday, 29 April 1994 Dear Sisters, Dear Friends, I offer a warm welcome to you, *Missionary Sisters of Saint Peter Claver*, on the happy occasion of the *centenary of your Institute*, and through you I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the members of your Community who cannot be present today. Likewise I offer a cordial greeting to you, *the friends and benefactors of the Sisters*, who have come to Rome in order to join with them in giving thanks to God for the abundant graces which he has bestowed upon his Church through the first hundred years of their service. This celebration cannot fail to remind us of the venerable figure of *Blessed Maria Teresa Ledóchowska, your beloved Foundress*. Her heart and mind caught the fire of evangelizing zeal from such outstanding missionaries as Cardinal Lavignerie; she became convinced that "there is nothing more sublime that gives glory to God, than to cooperate with him in the salvation of souls"; and for the rest of her life she was moved by the Holy Spirit to enkindle in others the pressing desire to bring all peoples of the earth, and especially the sons and daughters of Africa, to the knowledge of Christ and his Gospel. Like Blessed Maria Teresa, you too are called to bear witness to the truth that *none of the faithful can stand aloof from the work of evangelization*. Every believer must be a co-worker in some way. As I wrote in "Redemptoris Missio": "For each believer, as for the entire Church, the missionary task must remain foremost, for it concerns the eternal destiny of humanity and corresponds to God's mysterious design and merciful plan . . . We cannot be content when we consider the millions of our brothers and sisters, who like us have been redeemed by the blood of Christ but who live in ignorance of the love of God" (John Paul II, [*Redemptoris Missio*, 86](#)). Your Foundress began with the idea of setting up an association of lay people who, through prayer, work and cooperation, would support the missionaries directly engaged in evangelizing the great continent of Africa. Without lessening her efforts to create a network of cooperators, she soon realized that God's will involved the founding of a religious congregation of dedicated women, to continue and spread the missionary zeal which animated her own spiritual life. You are the heirs of that missionary project and of the ideals that gave it birth. The present celebration of the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, by focusing on the needs of the Church there, testifies to the continuing timeliness of Blessed Maria Teresa's charism. May you be faithful to it, and may it become more known and fruitful! I gladly invoke the intercession of your Foundress upon all the Missionary Sisters of Saint Peter Claver and upon your friends, cooperators and benefactors. With my Apostolic Blessing. © Copyright 1994 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana