



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MEMBERS
OF THE "WORK OF THE CHURCH"**

Saturday, 7 March 1998

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. I am pleased to receive you today, members of the *Work of the Church*, who have come in such large numbers and have wished to make this pilgrimage to Rome to express to the Pope, the Successor of Peter, your sentiments of love and affection and your dedicated commitment and service to the Church of Jesus Christ. You were spurred to do so by the recent papal approval of your Work, which has been recognized as an *ecclesial institution*, composed of the three branches of consecrated life: priests, lay men and lay women, around which are organized the other branches: members, militants and co-operators. In welcoming you, I thank you for coming and especially for all you do in the various fields of apostolate entrusted to you by the Bishops.

2. The Work of the Church was founded in 1959 by Mother Trinidad Sánchez Moreno, your President today. Later established as a pious union in the Archdiocese of Madrid, it went through various stages until it reached the moment, so longed-for by the foundress and all its members, of the promulgation of the Decree that recognizes it as an institution of pontifical right. During these years, the Work of the Church has distinguished itself by its fidelity and love for the Pope and its co-operation in the Dioceses where it has centres. This is why you wanted to be in Rome and offer your co-operation in several areas of the apostolate. I was able to observe this during my Pastoral Visit to Our Lady of Valmes Parish, entrusted to the priests of your institution, where I became more closely acquainted with your activities.

3. At our meeting today I would like to encourage you to live generously the mystery of the Church, which in Christ "is in the nature of sacrament - a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 1). Continue therefore to work in fidelity to the Pope and the Bishops, to show the people of our time the beauty and attraction of God's gift to humanity which is his Church.

In this regard, following the guidelines of my Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata*, it is advisable that consecrated persons receive continuing formation through appropriate theological training, conscious that a new, shining offer of love is expected from them, by a witness of chastity that enlarges the heart, of poverty that eliminates barriers and of obedience that builds communion in the community, in the Church and in the world. In addition, you must study the teachings on the Church which we are given by Scripture and Tradition, so that your love for her will be based on sound doctrine, which you will then impart in your apostolates.

4. The Virgin Mary, proclaimed Mother of the Church, was presented by the Second Vatican Council as "a model of that motherly love with which all who join in the Church's apostolic mission for the regeneration of mankind should be animated" (ibid., n. 65). May her motherly intercession accompany you and make you faithful to the commitment which, docile to the Holy Spirit, you have made for the glory of God and the service of his Church. May you also be assisted by the Apostolic Blessing which I affectionately impart to you.

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