



# The Holy See

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## **ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO THE MISSIONARY CARMELITE SISTERS**

*Friday, 29 September 2000*

*Dear Missionary Carmelite Sisters,*

1. At the end of your 18th General Chapter, I am pleased to extend a cordial greeting to you, in particular to those of you who, representing your sisters in 35 countries on four continents, have taken part in the Chapter's work of discerning what "the Spirit is suggesting to the different communities" (*Tertio millennio adveniente*, n. 23), in order faithfully to renew the foundational charism of Bl. Francis Palau y Quer and to respond promptly to the requirements of the Church and of mankind today, whom you wish to continue serving with generosity.

I greet in particular the new Superior General, María Esperanza Izco, and her councillors, for whom I ask abundant divine gifts that will help them in their responsibility of guiding the congregation with far-sightedness and of accompanying their sisters in a loving spirit so that each of them may be *a woman who has experienced God and is courageous in her response to the challenges of mission in the third millennium*, as you proposed in your Chapter. Actually, combining the contemplative dimension with missionary zeal, two fundamental pillars of your religious identity, is particularly important and necessary in an era that is so often threatened by the fragmentation or superficiality of human existence. Therefore, dear Missionary Carmelite Sisters, I wish to remind you that "Christ encountered in contemplation is the same who lives and suffers in the poor" (*Vita consecrata*, n. 82). Faced with the difficulties that you can meet in carrying out this sensitive mission, I invite you to remember the words of your founder: "Since we are quite ready to assist God's plans, he will not leave us without light and direction" (*Letter to Juana Gracias*, 26 June 1860, 2).

2. In starting your Chapter work in Ibiza, the source of your founding inspiration and for Bl. Francis Palau a place of exile, silence and discernment, you wished to reflect in depth on the original

reason for your existence. This return to the roots, which the Church insistently proposes to all religious institutes, is not a nostalgic return to the past, but is rather like the journey of those disciples who, while walking to Emmaus, realized that their true destiny was to return to Jerusalem, to discover there the immense wealth and newness of the mystery of Christ. They were thus able to keep pace with history and help to open others to the new horizons offered by the Gospel message. I invite you therefore to maintain a particularly vivid experience of close and constant contact with Christ and with the gifts that his Spirit has lavished on your congregation, in conformity, moreover, with your Carmelite tradition which is steeped in contemplation. Furthermore, as the entire Church celebrates the Great Jubilee commemorating the 2,000 years of the mystery of the Incarnation, it becomes even clearer that "Jesus is the genuine newness which surpasses all human expectations and such he remains for ever, from age to age" (Bull *Incarnationis mysterium*, n. 1).

The second part of the Chapter took place in Rome, to indicate that every authentic charism converges in the one Church to enrich and serve her, becoming more and more universal, like a framework of communion between different mentalities and cultures. This is an aspect that indicates your missionary soul. In this sense, starting with your foundation, you have a wonderful story to tell, a story of generous collaboration in the always urgent task of evangelization and service in the cause of human beings, especially those most in need. I wish to express my appreciation and gratitude for all this. But I wish above all to encourage you in your projects of prophetically announcing the kingdom of God in the world and in that history which remains for you to build, because "the Spirit is sending you in order to do even greater things" (*Vita consecrata*, n. 110).

Continue to devote attention to the emerging needs of our time, giving them an answer that is born of Christ's heart and of the Church's original mission. Actually, "the more one lives in Christ, the better one can serve him in others, going even to the furthest missionary outposts and facing the greatest dangers" (*Vita consecrata*, n. 76).

3. To conclude, I wish to place the fruits of the Chapter and the future of the congregation in the hands of the Virgin Mary. You, who invoke her as your patroness with the ancient title of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, are well aware that you could not be in better hands. She will help you to fight the forces of sin which, in many different ways, lurk in the human heart and in social structures, and will thus open your souls to the joy and hope that must pervade your personal and community life, your works and your mission.

With these heartfelt wishes, I invoke the heavenly intercession of Bl. Francis Palau and sincerely impart my Apostolic Blessing, extending it with great pleasure to all your sisters in religious profession.

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