



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE DAUGHTERS OF ST PAUL

Thursday 13 September 2001

Dear Daughters of St Paul,

1. With joy I greet you, gathered at Ariccia to celebrate the General Chapter of your Institute. It is an important "family" meeting and you want it to be full of communion and hope. The already "universal" face of your Congregation is well-highlighted, thanks to the presence of delegates from five continents.

I give a special greeting to the Superior General, Sr Giovannamaria Carrara, and to her close collaborators. I greet each of the Chapter members, and through them, all the Daughters of St Paul, present in 50 countries of the world.

I wish to express my gratitude for your love for the Church seen in your works and for the commitment with which you strive to live the spirit of the Apostle Paul in proclaiming the Gospel in the vast and complex "aeropagus" of social communications.

2. A short time ago you commemorated the singular night which began the 20th century, when the then young man, Giacomo Alberione, in prayer before Jesus in the Eucharist in the Cathedral of Alba, received the inspiration that would mark his whole life as an apostle and evangelizer.

He himself recalled that experience with emotion, when a mysterious light broke forth from the holy Host and made it easier to accept Jesus' invitation: "Come to me all of you" (cf. Mt 11,28). He seemed in that night to understand better the desires of the Pope and the exhortation of the Church about the real mission of the Priest. He saw with clarity the needs deriving from the duty of Christians to be evangelizers and understood that they must learn to use the same means that the enemies of the faith use, often with more cunning and initiative. He felt compelled to prepare

himself to realize something new in the service of the Lord in the apostolic field. He recognized his personal limits, but at the same time the words of the divine Teacher reassured him: "I am with you until the end of time" (Mt 28,20). Contemplating the Eucharist, he understood perfectly that Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is always with us. In Him we find light, nourishment, and strength to overcome evil and accomplish the good.

3. In your General Chapter you intend to return spiritually to those extraordinary moments of grace. The theme of your Chapter Assembly is in harmony with what your Founder experienced in that memorable night of prayer: "From the Eucharist to the mission. Together to communicate the Gospel today". This is a topic that leads you to the roots of your vocation and opens your spirit to the needs of your mission in the service of the new evangelization. The Lord draws you to himself: "Come to me, all...", then to entrust to you a specific missionary mandate: "Go to all nations".

Go *"together"*! This He repeats to you during your Chapter sessions. Go confidently, because you are sustained by the Eucharist, the source of renewed life, from which you can draw light, strength, the grace necessary for your missionary task. From this sublime mystery you can draw ardour and enthusiasm to announce to the people of our time with ever faster and more effective means the hope that does not disappoint (cf. Phil 1,20).

4. Don Alberione, seeing clearly the urgency implied in your mission, imagined you as "Apostles who burn with love for God in their deep spiritual life"; he wanted you to be sisters always "on the way", "bearers of Christ and living, active members of the Church".

Through the witness of his life, he has left you a spiritual heritage that can be summed up in these words of his: "You are founded on the Host. Always call yourselves 'Pauline': Jesus drew Paul, Paul grafted onto Christ produced the fruits of Christ..." (*Exercises and Meditations*, USA 1952, p. 168).

To become true apostles of Christ, you need to keep your gaze fixed on his face (cf. Heb 12,2).

May Christ be the centre of your lives and your mission. Strive for holiness! If you should happen, like the disciples, to spend yourselves without success (cf. Lk 5,4-6), transform this apparently frustrating experience into a precious occasion to pray and mature spiritually. The challenges of today are many and the means at our disposal to face them do not always seem adequate. Do not let the problems, the obstacles discourage you. On the contrary, may they force you to open your hearts to divine grace so that, with the strength of the word of Christ, you can sow the joy and newness of the Gospel with your presence and your action.

5. Dear Daughters of St Paul! I am grateful for the service you give to the Church in a vast and complex missionary field, the area of social communications. In this epoch of global

communication, you must make the message of salvation be heard. To fulfil this mission, the Church needs, more than ever, skilled labourers who are also convinced and credible witnesses of Christ. This is your vocation. Be faithful to it in every situation. Know yourselves to be true "Daughters of St Paul", communicators of Christ, in total and docile acceptance of the teachings and directives of the Church.

I repeat to you, dear Daughters of St Paul, the words of the Redeemer: "Put out into the deep!" (Lk 5,4). Do not hesitate to put out into the deep in the unending ocean of today's humanity. Bring to life in yourselves the fiery sentiments of Paul who exclaimed: "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" (I Cor 9,16). May this be the longing of your whole lives. The Lord is with you and in the Eucharist he continually enlightens you and refreshes you.

I extend to you my cordial best wishes that these days of reflection and meeting help you to follow your apostolic journey with greater enthusiasm, walking in the footsteps of Don Giacomo Alberione, of the co-foundress Sr Tecla Merlo, of all the sisters and brothers who have preceded you.

My blessing to all!