



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE SISTERS OF SAINT ELIZABETH
ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR GENERAL CHAPTER**

Monday, 15 November 2004

Dear Sisters,

1. I am cordially grateful to you for today's visit, which is taking place during the General Chapter of your religious Family. I greet with affection every one of you here. In particular, I greet the new Superior General, Mother Samuela Werbinska, with her Council, and I thank her for the kind words that she wished to direct to me. I extend my thought to all the Sisters actively engaged in testifying to the Gospel of love in different nations.

2. In these days you have been able to reflect on the charism that distinguishes you. When, towards the middle of the 1800s, your Foundresses, Clara Wolff, Matilde and Maria Merkert, and Francesca Werner, began to serve the "suffering members of the Body of Christ" in the city of Nysa in Poland, they based the goal and plan of their apostolate on the words of Jesus: "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt 25: 40). Inspired by the example of St Elizabeth of Hungary, who they chose as the Patroness of their new Congregation, they totally dedicated themselves to the poor and needy, contemplating in their faces that of the Redeemer.

From that time your Institute notably grew and today looks with confidence to the future, setting up its tents in various regions of the world.

3. "*Duc in altum!*". This is the theme that you have chosen for the General Chapter. Your apostolate, dear Sisters, will be more efficacious the more you remain anchored to the roots of your charism. Follow the example of your Foundresses, who cultivated an intimate dialogue with the Lord. Each of your apostolic projects springs from an unceasing communion with him. Cultivating an intense life of prayer and of listening to God will make it easier for you to assure the

brothers and sisters in difficulty not only material support, but also spiritual consolation.

4. In these days, you are studying so as to respond with "creative faithfulness" to the challenges of today's society. It is necessary to start afresh from Christ and to witness in a simple and concrete way to his merciful love for everyone, and in a special way for those on the fringes of our society who are considered to be "losers" in life.

May the Virgin Mother of the Lord accompany you always; interceding for you is St Elizabeth of Hungary and your protecting saints. I assure you that I will remember you in prayer and from my heart I bless you, dear Sisters, your Congregation as well as the laity of the Apostolic Community of St Elizabeth, and all those you meet in your daily apostolate.