



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE URSULINE SISTERS OF MARY IMMACULATE

*Dear Ursuline Sisters of Mary Immaculate,*1. I am pleased to address an affectionate greeting to the Superior General and to the Sisters who have convened in Rome for the General Chapter of your meritorious Institute. I wish, moreover, to embrace all your Sisters who work in Italy, India, Brazil and on the African Continent. I send them a cordial thought, confirmed by the assurance of a special remembrance in my prayers, so that each Ursuline of Mary Immaculate may follow the poor, chaste and obedient Christ with joy and with fidelity, and dedicate herself totally to the service of others. The Chapter Assembly represents a privileged occasion of prayer, reflection and discernment in order to determine together guidelines better adapted to the future of the Congregation. It is a propitious time in order to renew one's commitment to a generous, personal and communitarian response to the call of God. The Chapter theme is a particularly stimulating and topical one: *"The Ursulines of Mary Immaculate confront the challenges of a world in continuing evolution and - renewed - entrust themselves to the Mission of the Church"*. It reminds you to live your mission in full harmony with the Church, remaining solidly united to Christ and responsible for responding courageously to the challenges of the third millennium. Be aware, dear Sisters, that as related in a recent Instruction by the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life, "In imitation of Jesus, those whom God calls to follow him are consecrated and invited to continue his mission in the world. Indeed, consecrated life itself, guided by the action of the Holy Spirit, becomes a mission" (*Starting Afresh from Christ*, n. 9).2. In the first half of the 17th century, your Foundress gave life at Piacenza to an Institute to serve those in need. Maintaining intact your charism, commit yourselves to fulfil ever better your Congregation's apostolate, so that you may respond fully to the exigencies of our times. You are called to be "contemplatives in action", ready, in other words, to respond to the needs of persons, especially youth, and at the same time testifying to the urgency of a profound spirituality, renewed in its methods and forms but faithful to the spirit of your origins. Imitate the unshakeable faith of Bl. Brigida of Jesus Morello, whom I had the joy of elevating to the glory of the altars five years ago. As I recalled on that happy occasion, in her example and in her teachings shines "a constant invitation to trust in God. She loved to repeat, "Trust, trust, great heart! God is our Father and will never abandon us!" (*ORE*, 18 March 1998, n. 3, p. 12). The secret of the apostolate consists precisely in knowing that *"we have not loved God, but that he has loved us and has sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins"* (I Jn 4: 10).3. Contemplating Christ crucified and risen - the heart of the spirituality of Bl. Brigida Morello - will expand the horizons of your dedication to the poor, to the sick and to those reduced to the most stringent material and spiritual need, with particular attention to women and to youth. Thus, you will faithfully safeguard the inheritance the blessed Foundress has left you, her spiritual daughters, and you will be ready to adapt the charismatic inspiration to our time, stressing above all who you "are" before what you "do". With these sentiments and wishes, while I assure you of a constant

remembrance in prayer, I impart from the heart to each one of you and to all your Communities across the world a special Apostolic Blessing, that I willingly extend to those dear persons and to those who are the subjects of your apostolic care.*From Castel Gandolfo, 27 August 2003***JOHN PAUL II**

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