



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE GENERAL CHAPTER
OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS**

*Clementine Hall
Saturday, 8 November 2014*

[Multimedia]

Dear Sisters,

Mother Yvonne gave thanks for the audience but it would not have been possible without her persistence! I don't know if this Superior General knows how to govern, I do not know, that's your business, but she knows how to knock at doors, and loudly! I assure you! I thank you, Mother, for what you said. And allow me to be persistent too, thinking of Patagonia... I'll say no more!

In these days you have been focusing your attention on the theme: "To be a home that evangelizes for young people today", which is most appropriate in the social and ecclesial context of today, marked by so many forms of spiritual and material poverty. Today we indeed suffer from poverty, but also from a lack of love and relationship. In such a context, you can grasp in a special way the fragility of young people to whom you are dedicated with loving commitment, according to the spirit of Don Bosco and in the footsteps of Mother Mazzarello. You are called to offer to all the message of the Gospel, which is summed up in the Father's merciful love for every person.

From your session: the fundamental guidelines for the life of each woman religious and every community have emerged.

First, the commitment to let yourselves be guided by the prospect of "going out", of setting out on the path towards the many areas on the geographical and existential frontiers, with preferential care for the poor and the different forms of exclusion. There are so many of them!

There is also the awareness of the need to implement appropriate paths for change and for pastoral conversion, thus transforming your houses into places of evangelization, where especially young people may become involved in your mission. This means creating an environment of co-responsibility that fosters the journey of faith for individuals and personal adherence to Jesus, that He may continue to attract every one. In this way young people are formed to become agents of evangelization for other young people.

I cannot but encourage you to go forward with enthusiasm in this line of action towards which the Holy Spirit is urging you. Open your hearts to welcome the interior motion of God's grace; broaden your view, broaden your view in order to recognize the most authentic needs and the urgencies of a society and a generation that are changing. Be everywhere a prophetic witness and educational presence, through the unconditional reception of youth, facing the challenge of an intercultural environment and identifying forms of approach that render your apostolic work effective in a context — i.e. that of young people — permeated by the virtual world and especially by the new digital technologies. In order to do all this we need to always place Christ at the centre of our existence; we must let ourselves be shaped by the Word of God, who illuminates, orients and sustains; we must nourish the missionary spirit with persevering prayer, with adoration, with that "loss of time" before the Tabernacle.

At the same time, you are called to bear witness to an ideal of fraternal communion among you, with the feelings of mutual acceptance, accepting the limitations and appreciating the qualities and gifts of each one, according to Jesus' teaching: "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:35). I want to repeat some advice that I gave in these days to a group of religious: unity. Never, never let there be envy, jealousy, among you — do not permit these things! And unity at home. The greatest danger is terrorism in religious life: it has entered, the terrorism of gossip. If you have something against a sister, go and tell her to her face. But never this terrorism, because gossip is a bomb thrown into a community and it destroys it. Unity without the terrorism of gossip.

This unity — as you well know — requires a serious path of formation, which includes being up-to-date also in the human sciences that can help you in your mission. It is asked of you in fact to know how to listen with openness and understanding to those who turn to you for moral and personal support, to know how to interpret the situations in which you work in order to bring the Gospel message into that culture. In this regard, your mission *ad gentes* offers you an exceedingly vast field in which to make a loving gift of yourselves.

In the course of your Chapter meetings, you have reflected on your daily apostolic work, which puts you in contact with the joys, the expectations and the suffering of the people. Standing in courtyards with children, in classrooms with students, with young people in real cities or even "virtual neighbourhoods", in the marketplace with young women, you associate with reality and the ever new problems that challenge you. May you be missionaries of hope and joy for all, testifying

to the values of your Salesian identity, especially in the field of encounter, a fundamental aspect of your charism: it is an ever fresh and life-giving source from which you can tap into that love that revitalizes passion for God and for youth. May the inevitable difficulties, which one encounters on the way, not dampen the enthusiasm of your apostolic action. Rather, may the example of St John Bosco and of St Domenica Mazzarello inspire you to contribute even more enthusiastically to the new evangelization with your work in the field of education and schools, of catechesis and the apostolate of youth formation.

Dear Sisters, you know how much the Church esteems consecrated life. Indeed, it is at the very heart of the Community and a decisive element for her mission, to which consecrated life offers a specific contribution through the witness of a life totally given to God and neighbour. With the motherly help of Mary Most Holy, whom you venerate with the title of Help of Christians, may this be the commitment of each one and of your Congregation as a whole! With this wish, I impart from the heart to you and to all your fellow sisters the Apostolic Blessing. And I ask you to pray for me. Do not forget Patagonia! Thank you.