



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE SEVENTH INTERNATIONAL MEETING
OF THE "CATHOLIC FRATERNITY OF
COVENANT COMMUNITIES AND FELLOWSHIPS"**

Dear Friends in Christ,

1. With affection in the Lord I greet the participants in the VIIth International Meeting of the *Catholic Fraternity of Covenant Communities and Fellowships*. I thank you for your good wishes and prayers at this time when I am celebrating the 50th Anniversary of my Priestly Ordination. I see this as an expression of the communion which links you with the Successor of Peter and the universal Church, a communion which you feel deeply and which itself is a sublime gift of the Holy Spirit to Christ's followers.

You represent communities of the Charismatic Movement from around the world, which, in their variety, bear witness to the spiritual gifts which the Holy Spirit is bestowing on the Church even in our own day (cf. John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 24). How can we fail to praise God for the abundant fruit which in recent decades the Renewal in the Spirit has brought about in the lives of individuals and in communities? Countless people have come to appreciate the importance of Sacred Scripture for Christian living; they have acquired a new sense of the value of prayer and a profound yearning for holiness; many have returned to the sacraments; and a great number of men and women have achieved a deeper understanding of their baptismal call, and have committed themselves to the Church's mission with admirable dedication. In thanking God for all of this, I repeat the words which I wrote in the Encyclical Letter "*Redemptoris Missio*": "As the Third Millennium of the Redemption draws near, God is preparing a great springtime for Christianity, and we can already see its first signs" (John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 86).

2. On 27 November 1995, the Catholic Fraternity received final recognition from the Pontifical Council for the Laity. By this official act the Church expressed appreciation of the Fraternity's goals and methods, and at the same time wished to strengthen your ecclesial identity. That identity

requires you to be ever more fully associated with the life of the particular Churches. When ecclesial movements "humbly seek to become part of the life of local Churches and are welcomed by Bishops and priests within diocesan and parish structures, they represent a true gift of God both for new evangelization and for missionary activity properly so-called" (*Ibid.*, 72). In order to help Pastors and the Charismatic Movement to work together in building up the Church of Christ, the Pontifical Council for the Laity is preparing a document which will serve as an important point of reference for the life and apostolate of such communities, and for the discernment of their spiritual gifts. Let us pray that this document will produce the good results which we expect from it!

3. Your VIIIth International Meeting is reflecting on the theme of spiritual preparation for the Year 2000. "A jubilee is always an occasion of special grace, a day blessed by the Lord... The Jubilee of the Year 2000 is meant to be a great prayer of praise and thanksgiving, especially for the gift of the Incarnation of the Son of God and of the Redemption which he accomplished" (John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 32). The Great Jubilee is not only a gift but also a demanding task. It calls for a great effort to respond to the pressing spiritual needs of our time.

Because the whole Church must prepare for the Great Jubilee "in the Holy Spirit" (John Paul II, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, 51), I have suggested that the year 1998 be dedicated specifically to the Holy Spirit and his sanctifying presence in the ecclesial community (cf. John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 44-48). It is my fervent hope that during that year all movements enlivened by the Spirit, who is the never-ending source of holiness and communion, will come together to bear joint witness to the unifying power of divine grace.

4. The Jubilee of the Year 2000 is above all a pressing invitation to all Christians to *re-commit themselves to holiness of life*. True holiness does not mean a flight from the world; rather, it lies in the effort to incarnate the Gospel in everyday life, in the family, at school and at work, and in social and political involvement. Holiness is the fulness of life which Christ offers: he has come that we "may have life, and have it abundantly" (Jn. 10:10). This is our marvellous vocation!

Likewise, the approaching Third Millennium brings *the urgent challenge of the new evangelization*. True, it is not easy to proclaim the Gospel in a world which claims not to need God. Yet we are bound by the compelling words of St Paul: "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16). Today, this proclamation must be accompanied by a commitment to ecumenism: "In these last years of the millennium, the Church should invoke the Holy Spirit with ever greater insistence, imploring from him the grace of Christian unity" (John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 34). In this perspective too, I wish to encourage your communities to a further strengthening of their ecclesial character, at the doctrinal level and in programmes of formation, as the only sure basis for genuine ecumenical dialogue and action.

5. My dear brothers and sisters in Christ: again I thank you for all that you do in the service of the Church. Through the intercession of Mary, Spouse of the Holy Spirit, I entrust to Christ, the Lord of

history, your spiritual journey towards the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 and beyond. To each of you and your families, and to all the communities belonging to the Catholic Fraternity, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 9 November 1996.

IOANNES PAULUS PP. II

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