



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE ADORERS OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

5 July 1999

*Dear Sisters, Adorers of the Blood of Christ,*¹ I am pleased to offer each of you a cordial welcome and I thank you for this visit which you desired as a witness of your fidelity to the Successor of Peter on the occasion of your General Chapter, 165 years since the institute's foundation. I would like to express my appreciation for all the good you have done and continue to do in various parts of the world in service to the Gospel, and especially for the loving way you welcome in your life as consecrated women the expectations and needs of your smallest and poorest brothers and sisters. The Chapter is a fitting occasion for reflecting on the specific mission that the Lord entrusts to you, so that the experience the institute has had over the years can be a positive starting-point, on the threshold of a new Christian millennium, for the renewal of your service to spreading the Gospel in the world. Your congregation was born of the fearless faith and missionary zeal of two great souls who, in taking as their model the One who "became obedient ... unto death on a cross" (*Phil 2:5-11*) to reconcile God and man, found in the spirituality of the Blood of Christ the way to lead their brothers and sisters to God and to awaken in them a more vivid awareness of the supernatural consanguinity of the redeemed. In the face of the growing number of new doctrines and customs that were disturbing the religious and moral life of their contemporaries, St Gaspare del Bufalo and Bl. Maria De Mattias wanted to bear witness by their words and deeds that there is no human salvation except in the One who shed his Blood for love. This certitude made them tireless in proclaiming the Gospel, educating consciences and serving the poor. Your foundress, in particular, to whom St Gaspare's words and example opened new and unforeseen possibilities of consecration to God, felt called to support the joyful proclamation of the redemptive power of Christ's Blood with the wealth of her feminine genius. With this in mind she founded a new religious family which, in its name and life-style, would reflect the longing for universal salvation, reconciliation and solidarity which flow from contemplation of the Blood shed by the Redeemer on the Cross. An ardent mystic and woman of action, Bl. Maria De Mattias opened new ways for women's presence in the Church by her tireless work as a teacher and evangelizer, and offered original models for serving the Gospel.² Wishing to be faithful to the charism of your foundress, you have decided at your General Chapter to revisit the foundation of your congregation's spirituality and to interpret your mission in the light of the fertile principle inherited from her: the sacredness of every person redeemed by the Blood of Christ. This has led you to look with the eyes of faith on the needs and problems arising in the various difficult contexts where you are present, discerning in them providential "signs of the times", through which the Lord is calling you to a renewed fidelity to your original charism amid new conditions in the life of the Church and the world. You are studying the present to plan for the future, but always remaining well aware of your past, for which

you thank the Lord. Entire generations of your sisters have generously proclaimed and borne witness to God's love for the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized; they dedicated every effort to achieve unity in diversity through listening and dialogue; in recollection they fostered the contemplation that makes personal and community life a joyous sharing in the Cross of Christ, which builds up the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ.³ On the threshold of the third millennium, the need to reflect ever more intensely on divine charity, of which Christ's Blood is the sign, expression, measure and pledge, calls you to make your communities living signs of God's faithful love. This requires each of you to be guided in your daily relations by a look of supernatural tenderness for all your sisters and for everyone you meet on your way. Only a contemplative attitude, nourished by meditation on the Word of God and by constant prayer, will enable you to have this approach to your human surroundings and to welcome personal and cultural differences as an opportunity to enrich your original charism for the sake of ever more effective apostolic work in today's world. In this perspective the organizational and everyday aspects of religious life will prove to be as many opportunities for renewing your personal and community fidelity to Christ. It will thus be possible to build multicultural communities rooted in the congregation's charism and in your foundress' footsteps, bearing the fruit of original and generous choices. Your vocation is a precious gift for the whole Church. In the present historical context, marked by disturbing divisions and inequalities, it is especially important that each of your communities promote the work of reconciliation and solidarity, supporting the defence of life wherever it is threatened or endangered, giving hope where the wounds are deepest, where the rights of every person have been trampled on, wherever the silent cry of the least ones is raised.⁴ It will also be necessary to pay particular attention to the initial and continuing formation of the religious, so as to prepare them suitably to meet the challenges of our time, making the institute's spiritual heritage timely and fruitful. The awareness of your common vocation as Adorers of the Blood of Christ will lead you to live evangelical obedience in genuine and fraternal interpersonal relations, constantly seeking God's will. The fruit of this commitment will be growth in co-responsibility and participation in community life, which will enable you to offer ever better service to the needs of Christ's kingdom. This context will also make the involvement of the lay faithful possible and fruitful, not only in various services but also in the congregation's spirituality, so that their collaboration can become active participation in one mission.⁵ Dear sisters, consider your vocation as Adorers of the Blood of Christ as a precious gift for the whole Church and strive to live in constant harmony with her evangelizing mission. Think of yourselves as privileged instruments of the Covenant established in the Precious Blood of Christ, and bear witness with ever new fervour to the great values of reconciliation and peace wherever Providence calls you to work, particularly with the young and the distant. May your communities be a concrete proclamation of the civilization of love, whose foundation and hope is in the crucified and risen Christ. I extend a special greeting to the elderly and infirm sisters, who are an irreplaceable spiritual support for the congregation: dear friends, consider your condition as a valuable help to your sisters' apostolate and to the life of the Church. My thoughts also turn with gratitude and affection to the sisters involved on the frontiers of the mission ad gentes and in situations where war, marginalization and violence prevail. I would like to offer a special word of appreciation to them, which I hope will be a comfort in their toil and an encouragement to persevere amid difficulties and trials, seen in faith as a continuation of Christ's Passion.⁶ May love and devotion to the Blood of Christ, which illumined and transformed the life of Bl. Maria De Mattias, dear sisters, constantly guide your prayer and action, so that you can contribute effectively to the mission of the Church, whose one goal is to draw men and women in every age to Christ. I entrust your congregation to the heavenly protection of the Blessed Virgin. May she make the work of the General Chapter fruitful and, with her motherly tenderness, transform you into wise, faithful and generous women. With these wishes I gladly impart my Apostolic Blessing to the Mother General, to the capitulars, to all the sisters, as well as to the many initiatives which express your zeal as Adorers of the Blood of Christ.

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