



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO THE MISSIONARIES OF THE MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD

Thursday, 19 October 1989

Dear Missionaries of the Most Precious Blood,

1. It is a pleasure for me to meet you during the celebration of your *Fifteenth General Chapter* which you are holding in this city where your Founder was born and exercised part of his priestly ministry – the great missionary and apostle of the Blood of Christ, *Saint Gaspar del Bufalo*. It is significant that this meeting takes place almost on the eve of the day in which your Congregation and the Diocese of Rome celebrate the liturgical memorial of this Saint. Like so many of the faithful, we too go in spirit to his tomb in the ancient church of Santa Maria in Trivio, as did my predecessor Pope John XXIII, on 4 January 1963, to meditate on the lessons of his life and to beg his heavenly favours.

2. More than a few times Pope John XXIII linked Saint Gaspar in a symbolic way to the devotion to the Most Precious Blood, going so far as to call him “the true and greatest apostle of the devotion to the Most Precious Blood in the world” (AAS 52 (1960) 306). Saint Gaspar invites us to reflect on the mystery of the Blood of Christ flowing forth from the side of “him whom they have pierced” (*Io.* 19, 37). What boundless horizons this reflection opens up to us! On the one hand, that Blood, shed violently for the injustices of mankind, is the symbol of every violence perpetrated in the history of mankind, beginning with the cry of the blood of Abel (Cfr. *Gen.* 4, 10) until the end of the world. On the other hand, that Blood can be seen as a symbol of the whole work of salvation, which, originating from the Father, reaches even to us and is spread throughout the world for the salvation of all through the ministry of the Church of God “which he obtained with the blood of his own Son” (*Act.* 20, 28). In the vision of faith of your holy Founder, the Blood of Christ is an image of the Redeemer’s perfect love for us, and calls for a response of faithful love of God and of our brethren.

In his assiduous study of the word of God and of the holy Fathers of the Church, his contemplation of the Crucified Christ and his sufferings for the sake of the Church, Saint Gaspar delved deeply into the mystery of the Blood of the Redeemer, so much so that this mystery became the light of his spirit and the strength of his apostolic activity.

3. Dear brothers: I wish to repeat on this occasion the exhortation I made on October 22, 1986, on the second centenary of the birth of your Founder: "The spirituality of Saint Gaspar... is truly at the heart of the Christian life: the Most Precious Blood of our Lord has always been the object of a special attention on the part of all the Saints: it is the school of sanctity, of justice, of love... Never cease... to delve deeply into this mystery of justice and of love: diffuse it into the whole world" (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Allocutio ad sodales Congregationis Missionarium Pretiosissimi Sanguinis*, die 22 oct. 1986: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, IX, 2 [1986] 1152).

I was pleased to be informed of the meetings and studies which you have been conducting on this subject in the various parts of the world where your Congregation works. I whole heartedly bless these efforts, and encourage you to continue them, and to model on the cult of the Precious Blood the spiritual path of your lives and your apostolic activity. Be witnesses of that communion which Christ brought about through the gift of his Blood.

4. I am certain that Saint Gaspar, in this spiritual pilgrimage that we make together to his tomb, can speak to you not only as the Apostle of the Blood of Christ, but also as a great *missionary*. After his return from exile in February of 1814 and in response to the wishes of Pope Pius VII who strove to revive the faith among the Christian people by means of popular missions, your Founder devoted himself to the preaching of missions and spiritual retreats up until his death in 1837. In the ministry of preaching, he emulated his special patron, Saint Francis Xavier. For the most efficacious and lasting exercise of that ministry he founded your Society: the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Most Precious Blood, entrusting it to the heavenly protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He was firmly convinced that just as the faith is spread through preaching of the word of God, so through the same preaching "its revival is awaited" (*Writings of Saint Gaspar*, XII, 48). Your Founder is a model of evangelization, whom you must always imitate.

In the General Chapter which you are celebrating, you have studied the specific topic of *the mission of your Congregation*, making an analysis of the situation in the various places where you work in order to meet present challenges according to the charism of your Congregation. This charism, in fact, is the ministry of the word of God, as stated in the Constitution of your Congregation. In a society which too often ignores the signs of the presence of God, you must be the word that knocks at the door of every human heart, so that it may open to receive the Saviour. In a society which often fails to uphold human dignity, especially the dignity of the poor, you must awaken the voice of conscience that sustains the primacy of truth and love. You are called to do this in many forms of apostolic activity but especially through the preaching of spiritual exercises, retreats and missions (Cfr. *Codex Iuris Canonici*, [can. 770](#)).

5. My dear brothers: I fervently hope that the teachings which we have learned from the life of your Founder – contemplation of the mystery of the Blood of Christ and commitment to the ministry of the word – will be an inspiration for your personal and communitarian renewal, so that you may present yourselves to the people of God, not only as teachers of the word, but also as convinced witnesses to Christ, who loved us and gave his Blood for us (Cfr. *Gal. 2, 20*).

I commend your Congregation to the intercession of the Ever-Virgin Mary, and gladly impart to you my Apostolic Blessing.

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