



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER

TO THE PASSIONIST SISTERS Friday, 17 December 1999 Dear Passionist Sisters of St Paul of the Cross! 1. I am pleased to welcome you on the occasion of your 14th General Chapter and I greet you cordially. It is a greeting that through you I wish to extend to all your sisters present in 25 nations across four continents. Thank you for your visit which, besides being an act of filial devotion to the Successor of Peter, gives me the opportunity to know your religious family better and to appreciate the generosity which inspires its daily service to the Church. I extend my congratulations to Mother Antonella Franci, elected as the institute's Superior General, and I invoke for her abundant heavenly light for fruitful efforts in her new and difficult role. I also hope that this assembly, with the Lord's help and the motherly assistance of the Blessed Virgin, may instil in each of you and in your entire congregation renewed spiritual fervour, centred on the living, grateful and sorrowful memory of the Passion of Jesus and the sorrows of Mary most holy, a more convinced apostolic commitment and faithfulness to the charism of Maria Maddalena Frescobaldi Capponi, a lay woman, wife and mother of a family. I encourage you to continue on the path you have taken, always animated by divine love and by the desire to spread the Gospel of Christ everywhere. 2. The main objective of your General Chapter is to make more intense your love and service to those most in need, thus answering the Church's invitation to evangelize today's world, which is marked by many cultural, social and religious challenges. To this end your theme seems very significant: *The internationalization of the congregation challenges the Passionist Sister to be a prophetic sign of communion in the inculturation of its charism in fidelity to its foundress.* I kindly urge you to develop a formation and action plan that will help your religious family and every consecrated individual to practise the commandment of love, according to your charism. By more closely following Jesus crucified, you will live your religious vocation, which will prompt you to give preference to the young and the poor to be educated, especially women exposed to the risk of inhuman exploitation. You will be able to recognize the face of Christ in every person in difficulty, and for everyone you meet you will be witnesses of God's love. 3. This is a demanding mission and calls for a profound spirituality rooted in the Gospel. Your first task, therefore, is to seek God by constantly listening to his word. You will thus be able to live fully your particular mission in the Church and in society. Dear Sisters, strive more and more to adopt the teaching method of Maria Maddalena Frescobaldi Capponi, based on encounter, on an open, welcoming, caring dialogue that can create new relationships with God, with others and with nature. Foster your fraternal life based on contemplation and on the experience of God, which unites us to him and in him, making us capable of communion and of sharing in the diversity and richness of cultures. Invigorate your search for a wise inculturation of your charism and show that the Gospel is meant for all peoples. And pay particular attention to continuing formation, so that you will be consecrated women who are happy and can spread serenity and hope, mercy and solidarity. 4. Dear Sisters, your vocation is most timely! Be faithful to the spirit of your origins, remaining close to the needy with humility and concrete service. Love the austere life; by denying yourselves and by welcoming the cross of Christ in your life, it will be easier for you to fulfil the high mission God has entrusted to you. As the life of your foundress

reminds us, society sorely needs this: a crucified love! Won over by the love of the cross, she made Calvary her sure place of refuge. Today as then, you are called to this same mission, that is, to be spiritual mothers to the suffering and to whoever knocks at the door of your houses. As it was in the days of Maria Maddalena Frescobaldi Capponi, in our age too there is a great need for maternal sensitivity, for understanding and for practical help. May your heavenly protector, St Paul of the Cross, sustain you and may the Mother of the Lord help you in your daily effort of self-giving and Gospel witness. With the wish for all of you that the grace of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 will be a joyous occasion of fervour and renewed fidelity to Christ, I cordially give you a special blessing, which I affectionately extend to your entire religious family.

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