



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE HANDMAIDS OF THE SACRED HEART
OF JESUS DYING**

Friday, 5 January 2001

On the occasion of the 14th General Chapter of this congregation, I am pleased to extend my cordial greeting to you and to the sisters. I join the Chapter assembly in calling on the Holy Spirit to guide you, as you listen devoutly to God's Word to make the appropriate decisions about the path to be taken.

Each institute of consecrated life is a precious gift of the Lord for the Church and for the world. The Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Dying have been so for over 100 years in Italy and in other countries. This testifies to the vitality of a charism which the venerable founders, Mons. Marco Morelli and Mother Margherita Ricci Curbastro, were able to bring to fruition with admirable zeal. It is a charism which highlights an essential aspect of the nature and life of Christ's Mystical Body which is the Church. For, as an extension of the mystery of Christ in history, she is called to offer to the Father constant prayers for humanity's salvation.

Contemporary man needs more than ever to draw from the springs of the Sacred Heart of Christ. Only in his Heart can he find peace in the moments of anguish which today's secular culture makes less and less bearable. Spiritual poverty is very widespread today, even at times becoming misery. That is why the true remedy is the rediscovery of Christian prayer.

This is not an escape from reality and its trials, but rather a spiritual watchfulness and confident union with the divine will, in the certainty that this is always a will of love seeking to give men and women full and eternal life.

What better witness can this trusting abandonment find than that of a life wholly consecrated to the service of God, known and loved in the Heart of his Son Jesus Christ, who "is in agony until the

end of the world" (B. Pascal)? And how can this consecration be expressed other than in generous and faithful service to our brothers and sisters, especially the neediest, for love of whom Christ willingly drank the bitter cup of the Passion?

I therefore recommend to all the religious of your congregation, which is dear to me, that your entire apostolic activity be constantly enlivened and guided by an intense commitment to watchful prayer. May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Virgins, be a model for you, dear sisters. If Our Blessed Lady represents for every believer the archetype of humble and docile adherence to God's will, for women religious she must be even more so. Every Handmaid can be faithful to her own vocation if she seeks, in her heart and in her actions, to resemble Mary, the perfect "Handmaid of the Lord", in all things.

I fervently hope that the General Chapter, held precisely at the end of the Holy Year, will be a time of grace for the entire institute, a privileged opportunity for wise and courageous decisions made according to the invitation offered to us by the Jubilee, with its gaze set on the face of Christ.

With these sentiments, I impart a special Apostolic Blessing to you, to the Capitulars and to all the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Dying.