



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE ORDER OF THE BROTHERS
OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY OF MT CARMEL**

*To the Most Reverend Father Joseph Chalmers,
Prior General of the Order of the Brothers
of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel*

1. I am delighted to know that the centuries old Order of the Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel is celebrating its General Chapter, moved by the desire to continue serving Christ and the Church in total fidelity to its charism and to the directives of the Papal Magisterium.

This resolve is most important at the beginning of the new millennium, in which the Church confidently goes toward the future fixing her eyes on Christ - "the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (Apoc 22,13) - striving to fulfil faithfully the mission He entrusted to her.

I want to underline the fact that the General Chapter is held during the year celebrating the 750th anniversary of the gift of the Scapular. For this special jubilee I did send, 25 March, a special message to the whole Family of Carmel. Further, this year also marks the 7th centenary of the birth of the great Carmelite bishop, St Andrew Corsini, rightly remembered as an example for pastors and a model of consecrated life for all religious.

While uniting myself spiritually to your Chapter to invoke the Spirit of the Lord upon its work, I greet you, Most Reverend Father, and I thank you for the service rendered to the Order of Carmel and to the Church during the past six years. With you I greet the participants in the General Chapter coming from various nations, and through them, I extend my warm best wishes to the whole Carmelite Order.

2. The theme of the chapter is: *The journey continues*. Your reference to human experience of a

journey belongs to Carmelite spirituality. From the first hermits established on Mount Carmel, who had arrived in the Land of the Lord Jesus as *pilgrims*, life is represented as an ascetical ascent towards the holy mountain, that is Christ Jesus our Lord (cf. Roman Missal *Collect of the Mass in honour of the B.V. Mary of Carmel*, 16 July). Two Biblical icons, precious to the Carmelite tradition, inspire this interior pilgrimage: that of the prophet Elijah and that of the Virgin Mary.

The prophet Elijah burns with zeal for the Lord (cf. I Kgs 19,10); he sets off toward Mount Horeb and, although tired, he continues walking until he reaches the goal. It is only at the end of his difficult journey that he meets the Lord in the still small voice (cf. I Kgs 19,1-18). Looking at his example, the Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel understand more deeply that only those who train themselves to listen to God and to interpret the signs of the times are able to meet the Lord and recognize Him in daily events. The Lord speaks in many ways, even through realities that at times can seem insignificant.

The other icon is that of the Virgin Mary, whom you venerate under the title of *Sister and Beauty of Carmel*. Our Lady sets out to visit an elderly cousin, St Elizabeth. As soon as she received the announcement of the angel (cf. Lk 1,26-28), she generously departs, running along mountain paths (cf. Song 2,8; Is 52,7), to visit Elizabeth when she learned that she needed her help. In the meeting with her cousin, from within her rich spirit she pours forth her hymn of joy, the Magnificat (cf. Lk 1,39-56). It is a hymn of praise to the Lord and a witness of humble readiness to serve her neighbour. In the mystery of the Visitation, every Christian can discern the shape of his own vocation. Let it be so for you, gathered together in your Chapter, to give to your Order a fresh ascetical and missionary impulse. With a heart full of praise to the Lord in the contemplation of his mystery, go forward joyfully on the paths of charity, opening yourselves with fraternal readiness in order to be credible witnesses of the merciful love of the Word of God become man to redeem the world.

3. *"The journey continues"*. Yes, brothers, your spiritual journey continues in the world of today. You are called to reread your rich spiritual inheritance in the light of the current challenges so that "the joys and hopes, the sorrows and anguish of the people of today, of the poor and of all those who suffer may be the joys and hopes, sorrows and anguish of the disciples of Christ (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 1) and especially, of every Carmelite.

This year, when you commemorate the 750th Anniversary of the gift of the Scapular, you need to make more vigorous and decisive your will to allow yourselves to be clothed with Christ (cf. Rom 13,14). Ask Mary, who was so caring and so gentle towards the Child Jesus (cf. Lk 2,7b), to clothe each of us with the wisdom and love of her divine Son. While you are fully aware of the mission that God has entrusted to your beloved Order, offer to the world the witness of your fidelity so that Christ may be known and accepted by all as the only Saviour of mankind, yesterday, today and forever (cf. Heb 13,8).

For this end, I invoke the abundance of divine grace on you. May the Holy Spirit, in a renewed Pentecost, descend on you and enlighten you so that you can discern the will of your merciful and heavenly Father so as to be able to speak to the men and women of today in a way that is effective and appropriate (cf. Acts 2,1-13).

With these sentiments I impart my Apostolic Blessing to you, to the members of the Chapter, and to the entire Family of Carmel, imploring on each of you the maternal protection of Our Lady of Mt Carmel along with the intercession of the prophet Elijah and of the numberless Saints of your Order.

Castel Gandolfo, 8 September 2001

IOANNES PAULUS II

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