



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE GENERAL DIRECTOR OF THE FRATERNITY
OF DIOCESAN WORKER PRIESTS
OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS**

I am pleased to address you on the occasion of the celebration in Rome of your 20th General Assembly at the Pontifical Spanish College of San José. Through you, I would also like to greet all the members of the Fraternity and to express my gratitude for your important ecclesial service, especially in the context of the pastoral care of vocations. I do so at the same time with the principal aim of encouraging you to take a daring and realistic look at the future to discern the new signs of the Kingdom, to give new life to your charism - one of those charisms which constitute the very marrow of the Church - and to respond to peoples' true aspirations and needs in giving their lives an orientation.

Therefore, taking into account your own specific features and fully complying with my frequent appeal to redouble the pastoral care of vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life, you described the main focus of your work in these days as: "*The pastoral care of vocations, a challenge to our identity today*".

As Diocesan Worker Priests, you have always done your utmost in the pastoral care of priestly, religious and apostolic vocations, aware that they are the most universal and effective means of promoting all the other pastoral areas.

This Assembly, therefore, must be an event of grace in which, by reaffirming your authentic institutional foundations, you can formulate the vitality, fruitfulness and radicalism that is still inherent in the charism you have inherited, to bring new and unheard of approaches to the sensitive work of vocations ministry.

This task, especially today, is really urgent and necessary. It entails fostering, forming and following up the processes of the birth, development and discernment of every ecclesial vocation,

especially to the priestly ministry, helping the person to discover it as a gift, and to live it with continuous thanksgiving as a gift of love, and a present from God, "a *gratia gratis data (charisma)*" [a gracious gift] (Post-Synodal Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 35).

I want to urge you to reproduce your founder's bold creativity and holiness, adapting yourselves when necessary to the new situations and requirements in full docility to the divine inspiration and to ecclesial discernment. Ever greater attention to your original identity will be a reliable criterion in the search for the appropriate forms of a witness that is capable of responding to the needs of the times (cf. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata*, n. 37).

Then be faithful in your work to the charism the Lord inspired in Bl. Manuel Domingo y Sol, whom my Predecessor, Pope Paul VI, called the "*holy Apostle of priestly vocations*" and of whom I myself wrote, on the occasion of the Fraternity's first centenary: "*Faithful to the call of Christ and docile to the promptings of the Spirit ... not only was he able to identify the appropriate regulations ... but with his exemplary conduct and writings, also gave us the key to truly configuring priestly life to the stature of Christ's gift ... and in the Church, he was the seed of a new family of priests, imbued with the Gospel spirit and committed to serving men and women with unconditional dedication ...*" (Message of the Holy Father to Diocesan Worker Priests for the centenary of the Foundation of the Fraternity, 25 January 1983).

Dear sons, persevere with renewed courage in the work the Church has entrusted to you, seeking to impress on it your characteristic style of life and action: priestly brotherhood. You may rest assured that "*without claiming to be other than priests and no more than priests and holy ones*" (cf. *Escritos*), your life and example will certainly be an incentive to all who seek the radical following of Christ, fostering in those who are called "*that free, willing and generous response which carries into effect the grace of vocation*" (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata*, n. 64); for, all things considered, "*the priestly vocation is essentially a call to holiness which ... is intimacy with God; it is the imitation of Christ, who was poor, chaste and humble; it is unreserved love for souls and a giving of oneself on their behalf and for their true good; it is love for the Church which is holy and wants us to be holy, because this is the mission that Christ entrusted to her*" (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 33).

Go through with your arduous task mindful of the related aspect of inculturation since today the institute, which spread from Tortosa [in Italy] to other countries, and to Latin America in particular, lives an edifying pluricultural reality. Always work in full harmony with the particular Churches in which the Fraternity is present and in close collaboration with the bishops, diocesan institutions and congregations, giving priority to those that specifically encourage and coordinate vocational promotion, seeking new channels and methods that will enliven this pastoral context.

Confident in Christ's words, "*Duc in altum!*" (Lk 5,4), open your hearts to the invitation I addressed to all in my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte* (cf. 1,15; 58) and bravely face the challenges

of evangelization in this millennium, a new springtime of the Spirit, which we have just begun. Never say: we have tried everything: nothing more can be done. On the contrary, always be ready to continue transforming your commitment and identity as "workers" into practical pastoral approaches that respond to the requirements of your charism and the needs of the Church in the contemporary world.

Spread awareness of vocations to the priesthood as a vital problem central to the Church. When you return to your places of origin, remind all the Fraternity's members of the Teacher's words: *"Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch"* (Lk 5,4). Do not give in to despair. Work with cheerfulness and determination, knowing that it is not your work, but the Lord's. Firmly commit yourselves, therefore, to the indispensable duty of encouraging vocations to your institute, of reviving vocations to every type of consecrated life and of increasing awareness in the ecclesial communities where you carry out your work of evangelization, to make them realize that vocations to the priesthood are a vital problem at the very heart of the Church. Remembering that your institute has a specifically Eucharistic character, ensure that Jesus in the Sacrament is always the source of all graces in your initiatives (cf. *Escritos*, 1, 5-31) and that the Blessed Virgin, the model of consecrated life and of the *seguela*, accompanies you always and everywhere in your work of evangelization!

With these sentiments and as a pledge of abundant divine graces, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to you all.

From the Vatican, 6 July 2002

JOHN PAUL II