



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE URSULINE SISTERS OF THE HOLY FAMILY

To the Reverend Mother Sister Carmela Distefano Superior General

1. I am pleased to meet you on the occasion of your General Chapter on the theme, "*Mission: concerned with the charism and looking to the future*". It is an event of grace and a strong appeal to deepen your knowledge of the founding charism, to incarnate it in the present historical and social context in the most suitable way.

I greet you, Reverend Superior General, the delegates of the Chapter Assembly and all the Ursulines who carry out their generous apostolate in Italy and Brazil. Continuing on the path you have taken so far, you want "to spread the Kingdom of God through the apostolate of education, social assistance and mission" (Const. 56), attentive to the voice of the Holy Spirit who enlightens hearts and minds. You also set out to analyze carefully the challenges of contemporary society in rapid transformation, so as to continue to respond to them effectively, with incisive apostolic action. May God bless your resolutions!

2. Dear Sisters, preserve faithfully all that your foundress, Rosa Roccuzzo, has passed down to you. The whole of her life was marked by an intense inner conversation with God and tender love for the Family of Nazareth. In her tireless service to others she was inspired by the spirit of the Holy Family, as she sought to face with every ounce of her energy the forms of poverty typical of her time; from financial and moral poverty to the poverty arising from the lack of adequate health care.

She wanted to graft her work onto the great tree of the spiritual family of St Angela Merici, whom she presented to her daughters as a true mother in the spirit, a compelling model to imitate. St Angela asked every Ursuline to be a "true and unsullied Virgin and Bride of the Son of God" (*Introductory Letter to the Rule of St Angela Merici*): an ideal that requires a ceaseless quest of holiness.

The missionary style with which your institute wants to serve every person, without distinctions of race or creed, has developed over the years on the basis of these solid spiritual references.

3. Dear sisters! With prophetic freedom and wise discernment, be daily Gospel witnesses, present wherever need calls, capable of distinguishing yourselves by intense communion and active cooperation with the Pastors of the Church.

Today the great challenge of inculturation asks believers to proclaim the Good News in languages and forms which the people of our time can understand. An urgent mission and vast missionary horizons are unfolding for you too, dear Ursulines of the Holy Family. Like your foundress, be ready to live your lives in service to the poor, develop a real passion for educating the young and spend yourselves generously for others, especially those who are sick and suffering. So many people are still waiting to know Jesus and his Gospel! So many need to experience God's love!

Each one of you, however, knows that to be able to respond to these expectations, in the first place, you must strive for holiness with all your might, keeping in constant contact with Christ in prayer and contemplation. Only in this way is it possible to become his credible messengers, meeting the needs of your brothers and sisters in that simple, forthright spirit which your congregation's great benefactor, Bishop Luigi Bignami, called the spirit of "mountain lilies".

Jesus, Joseph and Mary protect you and help you to achieve your projects of good. May my prayer also be a comfort and support, as well as the Blessing which I cordially impart to you and to all those you meet in your apostolate.

From Castel Gandolfo, 12 July 2002

IOANNES PAULUS II