



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE GENERAL CHAPTER
OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME**

Monday, 11 October 2004

Dear Sisters, I greet affectionately in the Lord all the participants in the Eleventh General Chapter of the Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame, and I pray that during these days of deliberation, the Holy Spirit will grant you the joy of working together in a true communion of heart and mind, and bless you with an abundance of grace and wisdom. The Foundress of your Congregation, Sister Maria Aloysia, formed in the rich tradition of your spiritual Mother, Saint Julie Billiart, gave life to a new Religious Institute wholly inspired and sustained by God's providential love. After some time of generous service to her neighbour, she came to understand that the compassionate love of God for his children could shine ever more brightly in a life totally consecrated to the Lord. She saw from the beginning that both personal holiness and mission are inseparable aspects of the radical commitment to follow Christ. The celebration of your Chapter and, especially, the task of reviewing your Constitutions, offer you an opportunity to examine and to renew your allegiance to that same vision and to the particular charism of your foundress expressed in your spirituality and living traditions. This examination, undertaken in prayerful openness to the Holy Spirit, will assist you in determining those aspects of your Institute which should be strengthened so as to give an even clearer witness to God's unfailing love. I encourage you therefore to continue to embrace joyfully your call to holiness in the perfection of charity and to cherish, according to your own traditions, that asceticism proper to consecrated persons "which they need in order to open their hearts to the Lord and to their brothers and sisters" (*Vita Consecrata*, 38). Preach the Good News effectively by being fully what you are, and by bringing that reality to all peoples. My dear Sisters, the General Chapter is a summons to capture anew the initial dynamism of your foundress's spirit and to set out again "into the deep" (*Lk 5: 4*). May Mary, Our Mother, model of consecrated life, inspire and sustain you. Assuring you of a continued remembrance in my prayers, I cordially grant my Apostolic Blessing to all the members of the Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame.