



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE SCALABRINIANS**

Friday, 25 September 1998

Dear Scalabrinian Capitulars,

1. On the occasion of your General Chapter, I am pleased to extend a cordial welcome to each of you who have wished by this visit to reaffirm your fidelity to the Successor of Peter and to his Magisterium as Pastor of the universal Church. I particularly greet Fr Luigi Favero, who has just been reconfirmed in office as your congregation's Superior General. As I congratulate him on the renewed trust of his confrères and on his generous and competent service, I invoke the grace and strength of the Holy Spirit, so that with the help of the new Council he will effectively lead the Congregation of the Missionaries of St Charles into the third Christian millennium.

2. I still vividly recall the beatification of your founder, Bishop John Baptist Scalabrini whom, on 9 November last year, I wished to hold up to the Christian community as a splendid example of a contemporary apostle, the heavenly protector of millions of immigrants and refugees. As a zealous Bishop and loving father, he opened his heart with constant concern to the spiritual and material needs of the poor, embracing in his tireless apostolic activity all whom Providence entrusted to him. He left to his spiritual sons a precious legacy of boundless love for all who are uprooted from their culture and land by the search for work, by natural disasters or by adverse sociopolitical conditions.

Drawing his vision of the universal destination of goods and of the essential unity of the human family from the Word of God, he saw immigration first of all as a law of nature which renews "at every moment the miracle of creation" and which "makes the world man's homeland". But, at the same time, he did not fail to denounce the sufferings and tragedies caused by emigration, urging appropriate measures and concrete remedies for them.

Today you would like to relive his spirit, his same enthusiasm, as you ask yourselves how to renew, on the threshold of the third millennium, his desire to serve the poorest and his ardour as an evangelist without borders. With a new outbreak of the most painful aspects of the migratory phenomenon such as undocumented migrations and those of refugees from

wars, ethnic hatred and underdevelopment, ever broader horizons are opening up to your charity and your missionary zeal.

Therefore, in defining the “Scalabrinian Missionary Project on the Threshold of the Year 2000”, your General Chapter has very fittingly wished to respond to these needs by examining those areas in the world of migrants where signs of sorrow and suffering, rejection of those who are different, fear of others, exploitation and loneliness are most serious.

3. This is a arduous and complex apostolic task, which first requires of every Scalabrinian religious an increasingly convinced and transparent devotion to the poor, chaste and obedient Christ, a deep intimacy with him nourished by prayer, so that the divine Redeemer may become more and more the centre and motivation of his life and apostolate. After the founder’s example, dear brethren, you live the primacy of prayer in a convinced and practical way, especially fostering devotion to the Eucharist and to Our Lady: thus you will find the inner motivation and constant strength to follow the Lord on the way of the Cross; you will find in particular ever new energy for serving migrants, since fixing your “gaze on the Lord’s countenance does not diminish [your] commitment on behalf of humanity; on the contrary, it strengthens this commitment, enabling it to have an impact on history, in order to free history from all that disfigures it” (*Vita consecrata*, n. 75). You will let yourselves be guided by the divine Spirit in order to share the expectations and hopes of men and women on the move; you will also be able to enlighten those who regard immigration as a threat to their own national identity, to their own safety and privileges, by helping them to see the presence of individuals from different backgrounds and cultures as a potential treasure for the host countries.

The Church asks you, dear friends, to keep alive in every receiving community the values of brotherhood and solidarity, to reduce the areas of exclusion and to spread the culture of love. This arduous task requires on your part a complete renewal of fraternal life and the constant and convinced effort to make religious communities “places” of communion and living, transparent images of the Church, the seed and beginning of God’s kingdom in the world (cf. *Lumen gentium*, n. 5). In a divided and unjust world, may your Scalabrinian family, which is present today in many different ways from the ethnic and cultural standpoint, serve not only as a sign and witness of a permanent invitation to dialogue but also as an open home for those who seek opportunities to meet and share their differences.

4. The presence of your religious in different geographical areas and traditions and the special character of your pastoral commitment in a world of human mobility, often reflecting the needs and afflictions of the contemporary world, calls on you once again to live the charism of your institute in a new and incisive way. If the spirit of the congregation is to be transmitted and lived authentically by the new generations in a variety of cultures and latitudes, it is necessary, as you yourselves observe, to formulate your congregation’s ratio institutionis as soon as possible, identifying clearly and dynamically the best way for the full assimilation of the institute’s spirituality. Indeed, “the ratio responds to a pressing need today. On the one hand, it shows how to pass on the institute’s spirit so that it will be lived in its integrity by future generations, in different cultures and geographical regions; on the other, it explains to consecrated persons how to live that spirit in the different stages of life on the way to full maturity of faith in Christ” (*Vita consecrata*, n. 68). After the ratio institutionis, a plan for continuing formation should be drafted, to provide every Scalabrinian with a programme that encompasses his whole life (cf. *ibid.*, n. 69).

By helping you adhere to Christ with a renewed and constant love, these formation paths will lead you to discern wisely

God's signs in history and, by the witness of your charism, to make their presence somehow perceptible in the diverse and difficult world of migration. The realm of human mobility, where you carry out your work of evangelization and human advancement, is particularly open to lay charisms and professionalism. Foster the collaboration of the lay faithful in making your presence more effective among migrants and by offering them a more diversified image of the Church. This obviously requires of you, as religious, a special commitment to form lay people with a mature faith, to initiate them into the life of the Christian community and to lead them to share the Scalabrinian charism.

5. Dear brothers, on the threshold of a new millennium, as the Church is preparing to celebrate the 2,000th anniversary of the Incarnation of the Son of God, I would like to entrust your apostolic intentions, the decisions of your Chapter and your good hopes to the Mother of the Lord, whom Bl. John Baptist Scalabrini chose as the model of his spirituality and apostolic work. May Mary, the Woman who was free because she was full of grace and who left her land and home in haste to help her cousin Elizabeth, give you the joy of being docile and generous instruments for the proclamation of the Gospel to the poor of our time, and make you witnesses of hope.

With these wishes, as I invoke the protection of your blessed founder, I affectionately impart a special Apostolic Blessing to the entire Scalabrinian family.

Copyright 1998 © Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana