



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE MISSIONARY SONS OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

To Fr Josep Maria Abella Batlle

Superior General

and to all the Chapter Fathers of the Missionary Sons of the

*Immaculate Heart of Mary*¹. I am pleased to offer a cordial greeting and congratulations to Fr Josep Maria Abella Batlle, recently elected Superior General, as well as to all of you who have gathered to celebrate your 23rd General Chapter that gives you a special opportunity to express your communion and loyalty to the Successor of Peter. At this Chapter, the seventh since the Second Vatican Council, and at the beginning of the third millennium, you set out to "discern, in the light of the Spirit, the best ways to preserve and adapt [your] charism and [your] spiritual patrimony to changing historical and cultural situations (*Vita Consecrata*, n. 42), impelled by the spirit of renewal with which the Church has imbued all forms of consecrated life to face the new challenges to the mission.² For an adequate understanding of the signs of the times and of the work of evangelization, which is the task of Claretian Missionaries to promote and develop in the most varied regions of the world, you will find most useful the guidelines presented in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortations addressed to the different continents. For these changing times the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* will likewise offer you the appropriate framework for an apostolic spirituality that is fundamentally grounded in Jesus. Service to the mission, wherever you carry it out, must stem from intimate union with the Lord who sends you. It must be lived in the journey of self-emptying even to the cross, which Jesus himself undertook and traced for his followers. It is a matter of a close communion that you must learn from the Heart of Mary, the source of the best response and truest adherence to the Gospel message. On this journey you will be sustained, as was your Founder, by daily listening to the Word and receiving the Eucharist, "the heart of the Church's life, and also of consecrated life" (*Vita Consecrata*, n. 95).³ When, in the broad panorama of society, you glimpse not a few signs of a widespread culture of death, think of the Chapter's theme, "*That they may have life*", and feel that the Lord Jesus is sending you to proclaim the God of life. In such moments life, an immense gift from the Father, must be protected, nurtured and given dignity, especially among the most forsaken, with a word of hope and unstinting gestures of acceptance and solidarity. It is an urgent task for every consecrated person to "proclaim the *Gospel of life* with honesty and love to the people of our time" (*Evangelium Vitae*, n. 105). This is fundamental to the identity and harmony of people and of the human family overall.⁴ I give thanks to God with you for the gifts with which he continues to bless your Congregation, predisposing it better and better to the service of the mission. Your institute must welcome the precious gift of new vocations, especially in Asia and Africa, and take pains with their integral formation. The gift of new candidates and mission achievements in different needy areas and the

gift of the blood of martyrs that has been poured out bear witness to Jesus in our time.⁵ Through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten you in your work at this Chapter, so that, with evangelical words and acts, you will be able to guide and encourage all the members of the Institute, especially the elderly and the sick, the young men in formation and those who may encounter the greatest problems in their missionary service. May the spirit of fraternal life shared in love and dialogue be present at every moment as an eloquent sign of ecclesial communion (*Vita Consecrata*, n. 42). May the Lord also bless all those who together with you form the *Missionary Family*, founded by St Anthony Mary Claret, as well as those who share your mission in many works or apostolic fronts. With these hopes and feelings and with all my affection, I impart my Blessing to you all. *From the Vatican, 8 September, Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the year 2003.* **JOHN PAUL II**

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