



Dear Clerics Regular of St Paul!

I am pleased to meet you on the occasion of your institute's General Chapter. This is an event of grace which is a powerful call for you to explore the authentic roots of your congregation, to reflect on your specific charism and to try to discern the most suitable ways to live it in today's sociocultural context.

I greet the Superior General and his Council, as well as the delegates to the Chapter meeting. I extend my cordial greetings to all the Barnabites, who are carrying out their generous apostolate in Italy, Europe, Africa, America and Asia. In these days of intense assembly work, you are reflecting on the stimulating theme, "Looking to the Future". Faithful to your charism, you intend to keep Saint Paul's teachings alive and active in the third millennium, at the service of the Church and humanity.

I encourage you in your intentions. Joyfully reaffirm your fidelity to the spiritual heritage of your founder, St Anthony Mary Zaccaria, whose liturgical memorial we celebrated last Wednesday. A priest rooted in God and at the same time enthusiastic about man, he lived a demanding spirituality based on the "folly of the Cross". He took the Apostle Paul as his teacher, model of life and guide in carrying out an apostolate of charity for the clergy and the entire Christian people. At a time of widespread laxity, Saint Anthony Mary Zaccaria re-



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vived the faith by fostering an intense life of inner renewal centred on the Crucified One and on the devotion to the Eucharist, the heart of the Church's life. May his example encourage you to continue his mission, as effective today as it was then, because it aims at proclaiming and bearing witness to Christ, who died and rose for our salvation.

Dear brothers, in pointing out the ideal of religious and apostolic life to his spiritual sons, Saint Anthony Mary Zaccaria emphasized charity, which alone is truly effective (cf. Sermon IV), adding that to attain the highest of theological virtues it is necessary to advance in perfection according to three primary spiritual paths: the observance of the Commandments, the study of the Truth and the Gospel, and the proclamation of the Good News (Constitutions VI). The missionary spirituality of your religious family developed on the solid foundation of these concrete reference-points. "Plants and pillars of Christian fervor" (Letter VII), the brothers who formed the first cenacle of ascetical and apostolic life inspired by Fr Anthony Mary at St Barnabas' Church in Milan chose as their father

and guide the Apostle to the Gentiles, and strove to put his doctrine and example into practice. They also committed themselves to reforming morals and devoted particular care to the education of young people in schools and recreational programs.

On this same demanding and evangelically fruitful path, the Clerics Regular of Saint Paul still feel that they are being asked today to bear witness to the Gospel of love to their contemporaries. Love for Jesus, the "Crucified One who lives", and the desire to embrace everyone in charity without distinction spur them to seek, with prophetic freedom and wise discernment, new ways to be a living presence in the Church, in communion with the Pope and in collaboration with the Bishops.

Looking at the vast horizons of the new evangelization, we see an ever more urgent need to proclaim and bear witness to the Gospel message to everyone, without distinction. Thus the field of your apostolate is as vast as the world, and, as your holy founder urged, it must spread to where Christ "set the bounds" (Letter VI). Indeed, how many people are still waiting to know Jesus and his Gospel! How many situations of injustice, of moral and material hardships exist in so many parts of the world! But to carry out this urgent mission, it is indispensable for each of you, dear brothers, to encounter Christ every day in ceaseless and fervent prayer. Only in this way will you be able to show others the way that leads to him.

Strengthened by this interior conversation with the Lord, you will be able to work with him in saving souls and to meet the needs of the people in the spirit of the Apostle Paul, without fearing obstacles or difficulties.