

The Privilege of Belonging to Mary

From the extraordinary audience with Paul VI on the occasion of the Centenary of the Institute, on July 5, 1972

Dear Daughters in Christ,

The celebration of a date as important as this one is in the life of your Institute cannot be limited to a simple looking back to a luminous past. We need to look also to the future. **Will your Congregation know how to respond to the call of the Church in this tormented time in which we are living? What will make it possible for the ancient vitality of that robust tree planted by your Founders to continue to flourish in its fullness? Dear Daughters, there is but one response to these questions** which can explain the extraordinary fecundity of your past and which can infallibly assure your Institute's fidelity in the future: sanctity.

This means that you must ensure that the interior life take primacy in the midst of all your educational, charitable, and missionary activities without ever thinking that, because of this, your dynamic apostolate will be diminished or that you will be impeded from dedicating yourself fully to the service of others. It means you must love prayer, poverty, the spirit of sacrifice, and the Cross. It also means **a very particular commitment on your part to reproduce in your life of piety and of apostolate the example of the adoring and operative love of Mary Most Holy.**

How we wish that this decisively Marian character be conserved among you, in all its original freshness which, everywhere, is the unmistakable trait of the spirituality of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. **You have the privilege of belonging to a Religious Family that is totally of Mary and owes everything to Mary.** Is not, perhaps, your Institute the living monument that Don Bosco wanted to erect to Our Lady as a sign of his undying gratitude for the graces received from Her? **Yes, my Daughters, for as long as you will know how to learn at Mary's school to direct everything to Christ, Her Divine Son, and keep your gaze fixed on Her, who is God's masterpiece, the model and ideal of every consecrated life and the support of every apostolic heroism, that wellspring in your Institute of generosity and dedication, of interior life and fervor, and of sanctity and grace which has made you very precious collaborators of Our Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of souls will never run dry.**

Behold, this is what the Church asks of you. Do not delude us in our hopes, but respond to them even beyond those very hopes.

For reflection and prayer:

- What is the "temperature" of my love for Mary? Is it a tepid or is it an ardent love?
- Which of Mary's traits am I committing myself to imitate during this time of my life?
- Spiritual exercise: I will review the principal stages of my life and my vocation and will ask the grace to recognize Mary's operative presence in them... I take on the habit of ending my day with a grateful thought – not only to God, but also to Mary.

Mary Help of Christians, you are truly my sweet Mother, my Teacher, and my powerful Help. I thank you because you have chosen me as your Daughter. I entrust to your maternal care all that I am and that I possess. Let my every gesture and word reveal your tender and yet strong motherly love. Amen.