



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS
TO THE MINISTER GENERAL OF THE ORDER OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 800th ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH
OF ITS FOUNDER, SAINT JOHN OF MATHA***

To the Most Reverend Father Fra' José Narlaly Minister General of the Order of the Most Holy Trinity and of Captives

Dear Brother,

This year, as the Order of the Most Holy Trinity and of Captives, and all those who are joined to it by spiritual bonds, remember the eighth centenary of the death of its holy Founder, John of Matha, and the 400th anniversary of the felicitous passing away of St John Baptist of the Conception, Reformer of the same Order, I wish to join in giving thanks with you to God the Trinity for these emblematic figures of the Church, by sending you this simple message of encouragement and spiritual closeness. My hope is that it may serve as a stimulus, and accompany you with enthusiasm and determination along the spiritual path which they traced out, to the glory of the Thrice Holy One, and for the good of all those who are undergoing various trials.

The ancient motto: *Hic est Ordo adprobatus, non a sanctis fabricatus, sed a solo summo Deo* (St John Baptist of the Conception, *Obras* III, 45), which the Trinitarian religious have always heralded, is rooted in your profound awareness that this charism is a gift of God, welcomed by the Church from its beginnings through papal approval. God has gone before us [*primereado*], he has taken the initiative in choosing these his servants so as to reveal his mercy through them. They were able to accept the challenge, with docility to the Church who discerns charisms. Thus, if today we celebrate the *dies natales* of your Founder and of your Reformer, we do so precisely because they were able to deny themselves, to take up the Cross of Christ with simplicity and docility, and to put themselves completely and unconditionally in the hands of God, in order that he might accomplish his Work.

We are all called to experience the joy that flows from encountering Jesus, to vanquish our egoism, to step out of our own comfort and to have the courage to reach all the peripheries in need of the light of the Gospel (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 20). This is what St John of Matha and St John Baptist of the Conception did by their lives and apostolic courage. They, who were leading a religious, respectable, albeit somewhat comfortable and secure life, received a call from God that disrupted their lives and impelled them to expend themselves and toil for the good of the most needy, of those suffering uncommon hardships, to proclaim to them their faith in the Gospel, of those who would have been deprived of this joy. Over the centuries, in perfect harmony with their founding spirit, the *Home of the Holy Trinity* has been a home to the poor and marginalized, a place where wounds of body and soul are cared for, and where everything is accompanied by prayer, which, as your holy Reformer said so well, is a medicine that is better than any remedy, and by your unconditional dedication and selfless and loving service. Work, effort and freely given love are all summed up in the Rule of St John of Matha, in the words *Ministro e sine proprio* (Trinitarian Rule, n. 1). Indeed, the Trinitarians know, and we should all learn from them, that every responsibility or authority in the Church should be lived out as a service. Therefore, our action must be divested of any desire for profit or personal promotion and must always aim at sharing any talents we have received from God, in order to direct them, as good stewards, towards the end for which they have been granted to us, so as to give relief to the less fortunate. This is what interests Christ and that is why the homes of your Family are homes whose “doors are always open” in fraternal welcome (*Direttorio primitivo delle Suore Trinitarie*, n. 2, cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 46).

Now, in joining your hymn of praise to the Most Holy Trinity for these great Saints, I wish to beg you, following their example, never to cease imitating Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, to dedicate yourselves humbly to serving the poor and those who are enslaved. Today there are so many of them. We see them every day and we cannot pass them by, contenting ourselves with a good word. That is not what Christ did. We must acquire the mind of Christ, in order to see his face in the one who suffers and to offer the consolation and the light that pour from his pierced Heart. Dare, as well, to *take the first step* (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 24), as St John Baptist of the Conception proposed to his brothers through the endearing image of a card game, seeking to make them understand that, when we take this risk for a poor man, we win an authentic and a joyful life.

For the Saint, this is the challenge that God proposes to us: his poor, and if we lose this hand — he tells us — we are utterly lost (*Obras* III, 79). Therefore, in your apostolic endeavours and initiatives, do not seek any foundation other than “the root of charity” and “the interest of Christ”, which my Predecessor, Innocent III, considered to be the essential pivot of this new way of life, which he approved by his Apostolic authority (*Operante divine dispositionis clementia*, Bull 17.12.1198).

In taking my leave, as I impart my Apostolic Blessing to all of the members of the Order and to the

entire Trinitarian Family, I ask you, as does your immemorial tradition, not to cease to pray for the Pope. I know that this is one of your continual intentions, together with your intention for the poor, and that you present them to the Lord each evening. I rejoice greatly to think that, in your prayer, you place the Bishop of Rome next to the poorest, for it reminds me that I must never forget them, just as Jesus never forgot them, for he felt in the depths of his Heart that he was sent to bring Good News to them, and that by his poverty, he made us all rich (cf. Lk 4:18; 2 Cor 8:9). May he bless you and may the Holy Virgin take care of you!

Fraternally,

From the Vatican, 17 December, the Solemnity of St John of Matha, in the year 2013, the first of my Pontificate.

Francis PP.

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