

*Text of the speech that the Holy Father, John Paul II, was supposed to give to the members of the General Chapter during the audience on May 18, 1981. However, as we all very well know, on May 13, 1981, he fell victim to an attempt on his life and the planned audience was never granted. Nevertheless, on August 16, 1981, the Holy Father signed the text of his speech that he planned to deliver to the Marians on May 18, and had the Secretariat of State send it over to the General Superior of the Congregation of Marian Fathers, Fr. Fidelis Grabowski*



Beloved Sons:

On this very day, as I am well aware, falls the 350th anniversary of the birth of the Servant of God, Stanislaus Papczyński, who in the prime of life of 42 years, after a particularly wise discernment, founded your Congregation of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, in Poland. As you know, this very day also happens to be my 61st birthday. It is a very joyful and pleasant occasion for me to have you, the Marians, gathered here, around the sacrificial altar of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, before the image and in the name of Our Blessed Mother, Mary, so that in brotherly love we can prayerfully celebrate this double anniversary.

What is more: you are all presently staying in Rome in order to hold the General Chapter of your Congregation and to emphasize particularly the renewal of religious life that Vatican II wished for, as well as to enduringly inscribe it in your Constitutions, the rules, and decrees that regulate your life. Because of this we all ought to seek in one mind God's will in regards to the renewal and promulgation of your Congregation. Together, we also ought to ask Almighty God to give us the light and strength necessary to overcome various human difficulties, but particularly, to properly define the functioning of your Congregation in the community of the whole Church.

Indeed, I greatly rejoice in my heart that, following the fundamental ideas of both your Founder and your Renovator, George Matulaitis-Matulewicz, who are both Servants of God, you continue to serve "Pro Christo et Ecclesia," giving help to various dioceses in the world, wherever you have your religious houses, which is almost on every continent. Naturally, I am equally delighted that, by zealously spreading among the faithful, devotion to the Immaculate Conception, you greatly contribute to the effective strengthening and enlivening of traditional Marian piety that is so particular for the Catholic faith.

Thus it appears, that the apostolic work undertaken for the pastoral good of every community of the Church and combined with a Marian love and zeal, rightly expressed in the saying, as in this time you are to fulfill: "Pro Christo et Ecclesia." I do not believe that any difficulties or possible differences of opinion in regards to the spirit of your Founder or the return to the source of your religious life are of such magnitude that they could cloud or weaken the fundamental aspects of your vocation in the Church. Therefore, with God's help and according to your possibilities, you shall strive in the utmost simplicity of intentions and poverty of customs to undertake a pastoral service in the manner that the local Churches would rightly expect of you. Likewise you shall promulgate a renewed, enlightened, and suitable devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, for whom honor will never fade from the Catholic Church, whose glory will always be the greatest glory of every faithful, and whose name will continuously delight the spirit and the life of her every son and every daughter in the Church.

I do not need many words to imprint my thoughts and warnings in your hearts and minds. Rather, it is necessary to ask in prayer our most merciful Redeemer that we all, through our faith, our sacramental priesthood, our religious vows, would be able to fulfill in today's world what the Church demands of us. Therefore, while praying during this Eucharistic celebration, let us all ask that the important decisions of the General Chapter, of which you are all members, be enlighten by God's light coming from heaven. Let us pray for your finding a simple and clear formula of your renewed life both pastoral and Marian. We shall also equally ask for spiritual strength, thanks to which, the Marian Fathers spread throughout the whole world, can joyfully and steadily abide by this plan, while putting it into life for the good of the entire Church as well as for my own abundant joy. With this thought in mind, I readily received you this morning as I offer with you this Divine Sacrifice.

Finally I desire, that you to take to your homes not only my fatherly greetings for your entire Congregation, but also my Apostolic Blessing imparted to every Marian as the proof of my unchangeable favor towards you and as a most certain guarantee of abundant heavenly graces for the future.

*Joannes Paulus I.*

August 16, 1981