



CONGREGATIO PRO CLERICIS

Your Excellency,

In today's world a great many things are necessary for the good of the Clergy and the fruitfulness of pastoral ministry. With a firm determination to face such challenges without disregarding the difficulties and struggles, and with an awareness that action follows being and that the soul of every apostolate is Divine intimacy, it is our intention for the departure point to be a spiritual endeavor. In order to continually maintain a greater awareness of the ontological link between the Eucharist and the Priesthood, and in order to recognize the special maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary for each Priest, it is our intention to bring about a connection between perpetual Eucharistic adoration for the sanctification of priests and the initiation of a commitment on the part of consecrated feminine souls—following the typology of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Eternal High Priest, and Helper in his work of Redemption—who might wish to spiritually adopt priests in order to help them with their self-offering, prayer, and penance. Adoration always involves an act of reparation for sins. With that in mind, we suggest a particular intention in this regard.

According to the constant content of Sacred Tradition, the mystery and reality of the Church cannot be reduced to the hierarchical structure, the liturgy, the sacraments, and juridical ordinances. In fact, the intimate nature of the Church and the origin of its sanctifying efficacy must be found first in a mystical union with Christ.

According to the doctrine and the very structure of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, such a union cannot be conceived separately from the Mother of the Word Incarnate—the one whom Jesus desired to be intimately united with Himself for the salvation of all humanity.

Therefore, it is no accident that on the same day in which the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church was promulgated—21 November 1964—Pope Paul VI also proclaimed the Blessed Virgin Mary as “Mother of the Church,” i.e., mother of the faithful and the pastors.

With reference to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Second Vatican Council expresses itself in these words: “She conceived, brought forth and nourished Christ. She presented Him to the Father in the temple, and was united with Him by compassion as He died on the Cross. In this singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Savior in giving back supernatural life to souls. Wherefore she is our mother in the order of grace.” (LG 61)

Without adding or detracting from the singular mediation of Christ Jesus, the Blessed Virgin Mary is acknowledged and invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and

Mediatix. She is the model of maternal love who must inspire all those who cooperate—through the apostolic mission of the Church—in the regeneration of all humanity (cfr. LG 65).

In light of these teachings, which belong to the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council, the faithful are called to turn their eyes to Mary—shining example of every virtue—and imitate her as the first disciple. It is she to whom every other disciple was entrusted by Christ as she stood at the foot of the cross (cfr. Jn 19:25-27). By becoming her children, we learn the true meaning of life in Christ.

Thereby—and precisely because of the place occupied and the role served by the Most Blessed Virgin in salvation history—we intend in a very particular way to entrust all priests to Mary, the Mother of the High and Eternal Priest, bringing about in the Church a movement of prayer, placing 24 hour continuous Eucharistic adoration at the centre, so that a prayer of adoration, thanksgiving, praise, petition, and reparation, will be raised to God, incessantly and from every corner of the earth, with the primary intention of awakening a sufficient number of holy vocations to the priestly state and, at the same time, spiritually uniting with a certain spiritual maternity—at the level of the Mystical Body—all those who have already been called to the ministerial priesthood and are ontologically conformed to the one High and Eternal Priest. This movement will offer better service to Christ and his brothers—those who are at once “inside” the Church and also “at the forefront” of the Church, standing in Christ’s stead and representing Him, as head, shepherd and spouse of the Church (cfr. Pastores Dabo Vobis 16).

We are asking, therefore, all diocesan Ordinaries who apprehend in a particular way the specificity and irreplaceability of the ordained ministry in the life of the Church, together with the urgency of a common action in support of the ministerial priesthood, to take an active role and promote—in the different portions of the People of God entrusted to them—true and proper cenacles in which clerics, religious and lay people—united among themselves in the spirit of true communion—may devote themselves to prayer, in the form of continuous Eucharistic adoration in a spirit of genuine and authentic reparation and purification. It is our hope that the enclosed brochure outlining the specifics of the initiative will imbue this project with a spirit of faith.

May Mary, Mother of the One, Eternal High Priest, bless this initiative, and may she intercede before God, pleading for an authentic renewal of priestly life, taking as a model the only possible model: Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd!

I greet you cordially in the bond of ecclesial communion, with sentiments of profound collegial affection.

Cláudio *Card.* Hummes
Prefect

X Mauro Piacenza
Secretary

From the Vatican, 8 December 2007

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary