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UDIENZA AI PARTECIPANTI AL CAPITOLO GENERALE DELL'ORDINE DEI CANONICI REGOLARI PREMOSTRATENSIS

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A fine mattinata, il Santo Padre Giovanni Paolo II ha ricevuto in Udienza i partecipanti al Capitolo Generale dell'Ordine dei Canonici Regolari Premostratensi ed ha loro rivolto il discorso che pubblichiamo di seguito:

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE

With affection in the Lord, it gives me great pleasure to greet you, Canons Regular of Prémontré, on the occasion of your General Chapter. I thank Abbot General Emeritus Hermenegild J. Noyens for his words of affection and devotion and assure you all of my spiritual closeness as you prepare to elect your new Abbot General.

The Canons Regular of Prémontré, in their long and illustrious history, have contributed significantly to the growth and life of the Church, especially in Europe, and I join with you today in giving thanks to God for all the blessings which He has bestowed upon you over the many centuries of your existence. Consecrated life and its witness to the saving message of Jesus Christ has played a fundamental role in the evangelisation of Europe and in the shaping of its Christian identity. Just as Pope Gregory VII's call to renewal was embraced by Saint Norbert, so the Church today looks to his spiritual sons to contribute with enthusiasm to the challenges posed by preaching the Gospel at the dawn of the Third Millennium. "Europe will always need the holiness, prophetic witness, evangelising activity and service of consecrated persons" (Ecclesia in Europa, 37).

In more recent years your Order has extended its presence to various parts of the world and has sought to serve the Church through new forms of the apostolate. These will always demand a genuine commitment to imitate, in the spirit of your founder, the example of the early Church, by living and promoting the ideal of "cor unum et anima una" (cf. Acts 4:32). This witness to "koinonia" will be a powerful sign and source of hope for a world confronted with exaggerated forms of individualism and social fragmentation. In light of this, I urge you to continue to foster a spirit of fraternal charity, lived in the name of Jesus and in his love.

Like many others religious Institutes, the Norbertine family is experiencing some difficulties in attracting

vocations. In this regard, I encourage you to persevere in your efforts to make known to the world, especially to the young, the beauty and joy of a religious vocation. Let the pledge which you make at your profession — *Offerens trado me ipsum Ecclesiae* — be a living and eloquent expression of your "radical gift of self for the love of the Lord Jesus and, in him, for every member of the human family" (*Vita Consacrata*, 3).

My dear Brothers in the Lord, may God enlighten you during these days of deliberation and sustain you on the path of holiness and service to his Church. Invoking the intercession of Our Blessed Lady, Queen of the Rosary, I accompany you with my thoughts and prayers, and cordially impart to you, the members of the General Chapter and to all the Canons Regular of Prémontré my Apostolic Blessing.

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