

## **World Needs the Witness of Benedictines**

On September 23, 2004, Pope John Paul II encouraged Benedictine communities to offer their testimony of life, which puts God at the center. His words can very well be applied to Oblates:

"Stay faithful to your history," the Pope exhorted, when receiving the participants in the congress of abbots and priors of the Benedictine Confederation and the meeting of the Benedictine International Communion (the gathering of Benedictine nuns and Sisters).. "Our secularized world is in debt to you for the witness of your communities which puts God at the center," he said at the audience today at the summer papal residence. "Many bishops ask to have these vital realms for encountering Our Lord in their dioceses," the Holy Father said. "Through the liturgy, study and work, may you always be an example of Christian life, fully oriented towards God, respectful of man and creation." The Pope expressed his joy that "as a large Benedictine family, you are always discovering your common heritage."

John Paul II's counsel to the Benedictines was that they keep present the words of the Rule of St. Benedict: "Let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ. Faithful to this rule of life, you will have a future full of God's blessings," the Holy Father said.

From Sept. 21-29, the abbots of the Benedictine Confederation are holding a congress at the Pontifical International Institute of St. Anselm in Rome, on the theme "Globalization as a Fact of the Contemporary World's Development." According to Benedictine sources, the meeting, which is held every four years, assesses the way the Benedictine charism is being lived in today's world. Some 230 abbots are attending the meeting, representing some 8,000 Benedictine monks worldwide.

The Pontiff encouraged the Benedictines' contacts with their counterparts of other religions, and said they were "significant relations which can prove themselves fruitful." The Pope also encouraged them to promote dialogue with Christians of other confessions, in particular those of Eastern Europe.

"Monasticism is a natural platform for mutual understanding," he said. "This is extremely important at this moment in history for Europe to preserve its Christian roots."

Also present at the congress are 24 Benedictine nuns and five representatives of other Christian confessions. During the meeting, John Paul II listened to the "worries and concerns" being experienced by the Benedictine communities, and urged them not to be discouraged "by the problems of our time. God continues his work in you and with you in his own way, as Jesus warned the disciples: 'In the world you will have tribulation. But, be of good cheer, I have overcome the world,'" the Holy Father said.