



Ariccia, 27 September 2019

“The Wisdom of Starting Afresh”

Dear Sisters,

Here we are at last to share with you the “surprises” of this week, which were particularly relevant for the journey of our General Chapter.

On 19 September we “got in tune” with one another through moments of communion and convergence. Our prayerful reflection, our sharing of the most significant elements of the report of the Superior General and that of the Bursar General, and the input of our circumscriptions all wove together provocations, challenges and prospects for the future.

In the light of the Chapter theme, Fr. José Cristo Rey Garcia Paredes, a Claretian missionary and theologian, opened the central phase of the Chapter on 20 September. In his conference, *Women of the Covenant Today: Mission and Life*, he said: “In difficult times, the consecrated person must rediscover the meaning of covenant with God—a covenant that he took the initiative to establish and that he does not intend to abandon. Life in covenant with God is an adventure begun, conducted, directed, protected and brought to completion by the Holy Spirit. It is worthwhile to embark on this journey, which contains a lot of new and adventurous elements for each person.”

With this premise, we were presented with the *Work Instrument*, which, after passing through the capitular “crucible,” will lead to the drafting of our Final Document, the “compass” of our synodal journey over the upcoming six-year period.

The *illuminative stage* of the Chapter (21-22 September) offered us abundant light for both the present and the future. Our first guest speaker was Lidia Maggi, a married woman with four children who is also a biblical scholar and a Baptist pastor with an itinerant ministry. She is the author of many books, some of which have been published by FSP Editions, Italy. Her talk, “*Arise and Walk*”: *a Consideration of the Grammar of the Journey in Dialogue with the Book of Deuteronomy*, helped us enter into the dynamism of the Word. “Disciples of the Word,” she underscored, “will have to learn and accept that, in the Scriptures, a path always opens up after the experience of losing one’s trust in the journey, after the experience of wandering for a long time (during the Exodus, forty years); after the Chosen People had received the Word, abandoned it, and then received it afresh. It is a case of getting to one’s feet and setting out anew after many previous attempts. Ultimately, the journey of the Word teaches us the wisdom of starting afresh, of retracing our steps and beginning all over again...”

The second light we received came from the world of communication by means of the conference of Giovan Battista Brunori, a writer and journalist who covers Vatican news for Italy’s national broadcasting company. FSP Editions, Italy, recently published his book, *Benedict XVI: the Faith and Prophecy of the First Pope Emeritus in History*.

Brunori’s talk, entitled *The Reality of the World and the Church Questions the Pauline Apostle*, offered the Chapter a big challenge. “The winning answer to the convulsions of the modern world,” he said, “is to become apostles capable of creating what it is possible to create: *love*, through concrete deeds in our neighborhood, city, country, and therefore in the world. We must build love with our neighbor by speaking and writing words that help people to love, whether we do this through magazines, books, chat rooms, or via the Web. It is not enough to simply repeat things. It is necessary to be inventive in literature, in poetry, in science.... It is necessary to produce original thoughts that

help human beings to live. In this endeavor, you Daughters of Saint Paul provide light by means of your intelligence, your creativity, your spirituality. The word *Christianity* must once more become a 'happy' word—a word that speaks not only about love but about a certain kind of love: *agape*. It is a love that also involves carrying the evil of others, as Jesus did on the cross. The new lifestyle started by the movement generated by Jesus is what the contemporary world needs: a love that dissolves depression, a love stronger than death, a love that has the power to change one's life."

The third light kindled was by Fr. Rossano Sala, a Salesian priest, who is a professor of Pastoral Work among Youth and Director of the periodical, *Notes on Pastoral Work with Youth*. "Evangelization," Fr. Sala affirmed, "a duty to which every baptized person is called, can only be an irradiation of the fire that Jesus himself came to bring to earth. He 'ignites' us with his presence and power so that we can become a fire that warms and illuminates all those we meet."

So there we have it: a Presence that continues to walk the streets of the world and, as he did one day on the road to Emmaus, join the wayfarers so as to listen to, support, enlighten and accompany them, warm their hearts and fill them with the courage to proclaim the Gospel of Easter everywhere.

On the afternoon of 22 September, Sr. Bruna Fregni, fsp, presented the Chapter assembly with the results of a study carried out by a special commission appointed to respond to a Motion of the 10th General Chapter in view of drawing up a Communications Directory. Her presentation was received with great gratitude because it is a fruitful work that will undoubtedly be put to good use in the near future.

The day ended with a time of fraternity with the sisters of our Albano community. We had the chance to visit the new facilities of Queen of Apostles Hospital, followed by a festive supper, characterized by an enthusiastic exchange of greetings, vibrant testimonies, mutual gratitude, songs in different languages...all of which made the evening an unforgettable experience for us, for our sisters and for the medical staff.

From 23-27 September, we threw ourselves into a deeper study of the *Work Instrument* in order to improve it. In the coming days, after the Final Document is drawn up and approved, we will proceed to take a closer look at any changes that need to be made in our Constitutions and Directory. But we'll tell you about that in our next Bulletin....

Thank you all so much for your closeness to us. Your greetings, which continue to arrive from all over the world, warm our hearts.

Continue to follow us on the website www.paoline.org on the page dedicated to the 11th General Chapter.

A big hug to all! We'll be in touch again soon!

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