

Ariccia, 30 September 2019

### “To the Rhythm of the Word”

Dear Sisters,

We are writing to you with great joy on the day on which the Church celebrates the Memorial of St. Jerome—a saint very dear to our Founder. We will always remember Jerome’s ardent words: “Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.” In his text, *Read the Holy Scriptures*, Fr. Alberione refers to this saint in the following way: “In all the letters St. Jerome wrote to the virgins of Rome, like Marcella, Paula, Algasia and Asella, he recommended that they read the Bible: “Read the Sacred Scriptures often; indeed may your hands never put them down.”

And precisely today, 30 September, Pope Francis promulgated the Motu Proprio *Aperuit Illis* (“Open their minds to understand the Scriptures” [Lk.24:45]), in which he instituted the Sunday of the Word so that the whole Church can rediscover the Paschal and salvific meaning of the living Word, which urges us ever onward to new frontiers.... This is a day of celebration for the whole Pauline Family!

Dear sisters, here at Ariccia the days continue to fly by and those from 23-27 September were truly rich and intense, totally dedicated to a deeper study and improvement of the *Work Instrument*—a task that called for profound prayer, personal reflection, group study and a comparison of ideas in the Chapter hall. After days of patient listening, exchange of ideas, discernment, editorial work, choices and voting, we finally produced the final draft of the Chapter Document, which will guide the journey of the whole Congregation over the next six years.

On 28 and 29 September, the Chapter Assembly, accompanied by Fr. Gianfranco Ghirlanda, sj—an expert in Canon Law—devoted its attention to modifying and voting on the amendments to some articles of our Constitutions and Directory.

Fr. Ghirlanda’s interesting talk on the subject was entitled *Protection of the Constitutions, Protection of the Charism*. Here is an incisive extract from it: “The Constitutions are an expression of an Institute’s charism and identity. They are an instrument, means and criterion for sketching out the concrete form of an Institute’s work, according to the Spirit. The duty of a General Chapter is not simply to implement the Constitutions and see to it that they are observed to the letter. Instead, it is to adopt the criteria of discernment in order to concretely live the Constitutions in the community, whether this be on the local level or the highest level.” Fr. Ghirlanda then went on to remind us that “stability of the Constitutions is required precisely because, since they express the charism and the spirit of the Institute, they provide it with criteria for discernment. For this reason, they must not be subjected to continual changes.”

It is wonderful to think that the Constitutions of the Daughters of St. Paul call themselves “our guide to holiness and the specific means for living our covenant with God” (Const. 189).

The intense rhythm of these days was interspersed with moments of joy and celebration, characterized by ethnic dances and music from every continent.... A special and profoundly spiritual gift was the concert animated by the choir of the Diocese of Rome, directed by Msgr. Marco Frisina, a well-known author and composer. The words of his songs continue to mark the rhythm of our Chapter liturgies.

An important and delicate time now awaits us: the launching of the discernment process for the election of the Superior General and her six councilors. Fr. José Cristo Rey García Paredes, cmf, opened this phase of the Chapter with his conference, *The Stages of Discernment: Fiat voluntas tua*.

His profound, powerful and enlightening words touched our hearts. “Your 11<sup>th</sup> General Chapter,” he said, “is entering a decisive phase—an authentic existential ‘knot’ that connects you to the Paschal Mystery. Days of great existential intensity await you in this time characterized by discernment and decision-making. In the Spirit, you will elect some people who will be entrusted with the leadership of your Institute, in the hope that they will dedicate their lives and their service to your great Pauline community. Pray for them because where there is life, there is also death. Pray that they will not entrench themselves in power, domination or manipulation, but that they will be *servants* of the Spirit at every moment. May you enter this phase of the Chapter with the best personal and community dispositions. All of you, without exception, both veterans and newcomers, are ‘actors’ in this event! May none of you refuse to be the presence and inspiration of the Spirit for the others!”

Dear sisters throughout the world, in every community, we earnestly beg you to gather round us in a single, all-inclusive embrace, asking that we might all welcome in fervent prayer “the choices of the Spirit....”

We’ll be in touch again soon!

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