



Let us firmly trust  
in the bountiful goodness of  
**God.**

He has helped until now  
and will continue to do so.

Mother Pauline 1878

+ Rome, August 10, 2011

Dear Sisters,

The photo I am using for this letter I took in June during my visitation in the Indian Reservation in Lower Brule, South Dakota. After a sunny, but hot and humid day the sky suddenly became black; a tempest drew nearer. A heavy wind storm, almost similar to a tornado, shook our trailer. The trees all around bent in the wind, rain dashed against the windows, sand hurtled through the air. It was an eerie atmosphere. But all of a sudden the first rays of sunlight appeared and a wonderful rainbow broke through the dark sky. It was a fascinating natural spectacle.

The rainbow – a symbol of God's covenant with us, is a sign that God is present in all the storms and darkness of our life. Mother Pauline experienced that time and again, especially during the *Kulturkampf*. In many letters she encouraged the Sisters to trust in God's faithfulness. The experience of the rainbow inspired me to reflect - in preparation for August 21 - about our response to God's faithfulness.

Many of us can look back on 50 or more years in Religious Life, some even on 75 or 80 years. But regardless of our years as Religious our vocation remains a grace. We can never say that with the number of years our vocation remains more unassailable. No, the call to follow Christ more closely reaches us every day anew. It is a daily chance and challenge to let go of everything in order to embrace time and again our mission. Exterior forms may change, but not the innermost essence of our vocation, to follow Christ in poverty, chastity and

obedience in community. Our commitment, once given, is total and irrevocable. And yet, we know that we carry it in “fragile vessels,” that it remains vulnerable and assailable. Mother Pauline had prayed until her last breath for the grace of perseverance. That might astonish us! But she knew that Satan can take advantage just of our weakest moments in order to shake our commitment. Even Jesus experienced this temptation on the cross. “If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” (Mt 27:40) Peter, who felt so certain of his fidelity to the Lord, had to experience his weakness in order to learn that he can do nothing without his Master.

How often do we have to admit that the “fire” with which we began our Religious Life no longer has enough “fuel”! Let us not forget: Jesus’ call remains an invitation which we can accept or reject. God is love and love does not force. God wants our free “Yes,” as Mary gave it. “Her FIAT is our fundamental disposition ...” we read in Article 6 of our Constitutions. The total gift of our self through our vows always remains a great challenge, especially because of its contrast to the “values” of our society. Regrettably there are theologians who have the opinion that a commitment for ever is impossible. Indeed, humanly speaking, it is not possible, but “nothing will be impossible for God.” (Luke 1:37) Countless religious and married couples have lived a life-long commitment and in this way they matured in freedom and love. Love wants perpetuity, it wants eternity; there is no temporary love.

We live our vows in community, which claims justifiable demands on us, but which can also be experienced as a daily blessing. We live together with Sisters whom we did not choose. God calls those whom he wills. He does not call the qualified, he qualifies the called.

Dear Sisters, I also want to encourage you not to diminish your efforts for vocations. Our prayer for “laborers of his harvest” (Cf. Luke 10:2) and our living witness always come first. Let us never get tired in that. The prayer for vocations is at the same time an expression of our gratitude towards God for the grace of our vocation that we have received. It is always an impressing witness when Sisters after 50, 70 or 80 years say that they could look back with gratitude on each moment of their lives. Young people sense whether we live our vocation joyfully or not. They want to experience an alternative lifestyle which is shaped by an intense relationship to God and by a loving relationship to others and to our own Sisters. Our effort for vocations is not a self-manifestation but only a manifestation of Jesus Christ. That requires that we let ourselves be more and more transformed into the image of Christ. Then young

people will ask also today: “Where are you staying?” “Come and you will see!” was the answer Jesus gives – also today, through us!

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### **Information:**

- From June 28 to July 11 a group of five Sisters from the N.A. Eastern Province were with us in the Generalate for a renewal course. Sr. Maria Dolores Tan from the Philippines also joined the group. Guided by the theme “I am a pilgrim,” they usually visited one of the early Christian Basilicas in the morning. In the afternoon, through discussions, they deepened the themes of those pilgrimages. An unforgettable event was the Eucharistic celebration near the grave of St. Peter. – From July 11 to 18 the Sisters visited the German Province, which is always the highlight of the renewal for each group.
- From July 22 to August 1 the meeting with eleven younger Sisters took place here in the Generalate. From August 1 to 8 the group was in Paderborn. The main purpose of the encounter was to get to know one another. Important moments were the sharing among themselves, the experience of unity in diversity, information about the various Provinces/Delegation, and walking together in the footsteps of the first Christians here in Rome and in those of Mother Pauline in Paderborn.
- From August 12 to September 27, I will be in the Eastern Province. The primary purpose of my visit is to give a course about the spirituality of letting go. I will give this course in Danville. I will also be present for the meeting of the Provincial Treasurers, which takes place in Mendham from September 9-15. As always I ask you to include the travels and the deliberations in your prayers
- Because it is not possible for the Jubilarians of this year to thank you personally for all the spiritual and material gifts they have received, they asked me to forward their expression of gratitude. They enjoyed very much all signs of relatedness.

“I will give you a future and a hope.” (Jer 29:11) These words of the prophet Jeremiah, which the members of the Enlarged Council have chosen as the theme for the General Chapter, were Mother Pauline’s firm conviction for our Congregation. “No timidity was within me,” she writes in remembrance of the day of Investing. The blessing of the Church was a “blessing of fertility” for her and gave her the “holy security” that the Spirit of God would guide the Congregation. It is our part to continue to “sow faithfully, not concerned about when the harvest will be ready or by whose hands the reaping will be done.” (Article 33)

With hearty greetings, also from the Sisters of the Generalate community,

your

*Sr. Adalberta*