



Sieger Köder: The Meal with Sinners

**We return to the altar of God  
with our everyday struggles and joys  
so that our lives  
can be offered to the Father  
and be transformed  
into a living memory of Jesus,  
a light of hope  
to the people of our times.**

Chapter Document 2007

+ Rome, October 18, 2007

Dear Sisters,

Our Constitutions and the document of the General Chapter give a special importance to our eucharistic lifestyle. This expression is familiar to us since the General Chapter of 2001. But is it really clear to us what a eucharistic lifestyle embraces? During the General Chapter we reflected on this idea, first in groups, then in the plenary session. The variety of answers made it very clear that the Eucharist is essential for our life. At the same time the question arose asking what really would be characteristic of a “eucharistic form” (an expression which Pope Benedict XVI uses in *Sacramentum Caritatis*) of our life and what would distinguish a eucharistic lifestyle from other forms of life. Fr. Anthony McSweeney, who accompanied us in our Chapter, gave a talk about *Eucharistic Spirituality* in which he stressed that the rites of the Mass can shed light on a lifestyle which is formed by the Eucharist and found in the characteristic spirit of Mother Pauline. This approach has the advantage of helping us to better understand the rites themselves and their connection with our daily life.

Looking at the ritual actions of the Mass shows us that they are taken from daily life. They are forms of behavior which reflect meaning in human life; for example, gathering, greeting, reconciling, dialoging, preparing the table, taking a meal. As a ritual action these daily activities take on a new and unique meaning in as much as they express the attitude of Jesus. They become signs of salvation which God, in his unconditional love, wants to give us. This requires on our part an openness to accept the very personal relationship that God wants to enter into with us. Only then will we become conformed to Jesus, fashioning our behavior accordingly. “We return to the altar of God with our everyday struggles and joys so that our lives can be offered to the Father and be transformed into a living memory of Jesus, a light of hope to the people of our times.” (Document of the General Chapter 2007)

In some of my next letters I want to reflect on the rites of the Mass. They can help us, “to find the pattern of our transformation and guide us on the way to becoming what we receive.” (Document of the General Chapter 2007). In this letter I will reflect on some aspects of communion –as an introduction for further considerations.

In article 11 of the revised Constitutions we read: “The celebration of the Eucharist is the summit of divine worship. It is the **expressive sign of our communion with God and with one another.**” That remains a constant challenge. Each Eucharist is never a private matter, but always an act of building community. In the Mass we do not say *I* but *we*, except when the respective action requires the first person (for example for the penitential rite, the Credo). “The liturgy is not performed by individuals but by the community of the faithful at large. By community is meant not only the people who are actually

present in the church. Rather, it extends itself beyond the barrier of the respective place and embraces the faithful all over the earth. It extends itself likewise beyond the barrier of time, knowing that the faithful here on earth are also united with the deceased.” (Romano Guardini) We gather as a community, as a community we are involved in the liturgy, as a community we are sent. How is this reflected in our daily lives? Are we open, welcoming communities? Many a time the problem is not to know that we are part of the large community of the Church. The problem only begins when we are “together with other people, being united with them on a deeper level. And it is not only with a small circle of people who are close to us by similar efforts and ambitions, but with all, also with the indifferent ones, those who are offensive or even hostile-minded. The demand is to open the barriers, to reach out to others and share their life.”(Romano Guardini)

The painting from Sieger Köder shows just that in a very impressive way. Jesus does not exclude anyone from the community at the table. He is the host for a very mixed group of people who in reality would hardly ever sit together around one table. We see a wounded African, a woman belonging to a higher social class, a student, a clown who in no way looks comical, an old blind woman, a prostitute, a Rabbi. A strange group at table! But in each person I can see a part of myself. Where is my place in this circle? It is left to each one of us to identify ourselves with the one or other person. In the eighth place is the host, Jesus. We see only his hands, sharing bread. How would it be if we would take his place? In our Chapter Document we read: “Impress your image on me. Let me be your hands and feet, your eyes and ears, your words and feelings. Impress your image on my countenance, live again in me for this world and for all people.” That means to give to the excluded and uncomfortable the “bread” of our love and the “wine” of our understanding. “Welcoming and creatively open communities gift others with warmth and hospitality and are truly prophetic in witnessing to a world plagued by destructive and broken relationships. As an international community, we take up the challenge to foster communion among peoples and cultures. Our community living is not an end in itself but serves the mission of Christ.” (Article 31 of the revised Constitutions)

### Information:

➤ With gratitude I look back on the festivities on the occasion of the 100 years of existence of the Motherhouse in San Bernardo on September 28 and on the 80 years of existence of the Uruguay-Argentinean Province and of the Motherhouse in Montevideo on October 6. It would go beyond the scope of this letter to go into details. The high point in both Provinces was the Eucharist which was celebrated by the Bishop of San Bernardo in Chile and by the Archbishop in Montevideo. Many priests who are close to our Congregation were concelebrants. In both Motherhouses many friends, our lay associates, former pupils and teachers of our schools also participated. In San Bernardo representatives of the government, the band from our school in Talcahuano and the choir from our school in Santiago were present for the ceremonies. In San Bernardo, at the end of the day, a little palm tree was planted that had been grown from a seed of a palm tree in the Motherhouse garden which is more than 100 years old. All were deeply moved when a more than 80 year old Sister and a young novice planted the palm together. It was a sign that new life can grow out of a fulfilled life. In Montevideo at the end of the Eucharist the Archbishop blessed a statue of Mother Pauline which was then carried in procession into the garden of the Motherhouse where a small sanctuary had been prepared.

In both Provinces the festivities had been developed in the spirit of “youthful joyousness” – an expression of the vitality of Mother Pauline’s charism in the hearts of the Sisters. The gratitude which the Sisters received from the people testified well enough how much the presence of the Sisters had been appreciated and is still appreciated.

- With the election of Sr. María del Rosario as general councilor we had to find a new structure for the Uruguay-Argentinean Province. After much prayer and consultation with the members of the provincial leadership we came to the following solution: the Province will be related to the Generalate in a way similar to that of the Philippine Unit – at first “ad experimentum” for one year. Sr. María del Rosario will be the contact person in Rome. In the Province itself Sr. María Angelina Rivarola, first assistant, will be the contact person for the Sisters in the Province as well as to the Generalate in Rome. I am very grateful to the provincial leadership and to the Sisters that they accepted this new structure with great readiness. Let us accompany this new beginning with our prayers, dear Sisters!
- The term of the new general leadership will officially begin on November 4, the anniversary of Mother Pauline’s first profession. From November 7 to 14 my councilors and I will be in Germany in the house of prayer in Thülen, to plan the coming six years. I ask you, dear Sisters, to also accompany us during these days with your prayers.

With hearty greeting, also from the Sisters in Villa Paolina, I remain your grateful

*Sr. Adalberto*