

Rome, February 22, 2006

Dear Sisters,

One week from today Lent begins, a time which invites us to accompany Jesus on his way to Jerusalem. But in reality it is he himself who “accompanies us through the desert of our poverty” (Pope Benedict XVI, Message for Lent 2006) and who carries us “whenever it gets too tedious” (Mother Pauline, 1849). The title of the picture which I chose for this letter is “HE AIN’T HEAVY, HE’S MY BROTHER.” In the song of the same name the content of this sentence is repeated again and again: “He ain’t heavy, he’s my brother, no burden is he to bear, he would not encumber me. The load doesn’t weigh me down at all.”

These words could have been said by Jesus. Already in the Old Testament we read in the fourth oracle of the “Servant-of-the-Lord”: “We had all gone astray like sheep, each following his own way. But the Lord laid upon him the guilt of us all.” (Is 53,6) In Jesus this prophecy reaches its fulfillment. He, who is without sin, agrees to bear our sins in his body. He agrees to carry us in order to fulfill the mission that he received from his Father: to give eternal life to all who believe. (Cf. John 17)



In this year’s Message for Lent, Pope Benedict XVI took up this theme of supporting love. “Jesus, at the sight of the crowds, was moved with pity” (Mt 9:36). These words are for the Holy Father a burning issue for our present time: “Even now, the compassionate ‘gaze’ of Christ continues to fall upon individuals and peoples. He watches them, knowing that the divine ‘plan’ includes their call to salvation. Jesus knows the perils that put this plan at risk, and He is moved with pity for the crowds. He chooses to defend them from the wolves even at the cost of His own life. ... In the face of the terrible challenge of poverty afflicting so much of the world’s population, indifference and self-centered isolation stand in stark contrast to the ‘gaze’ of Christ. Fasting and almsgiving, which, together with prayer, the Church proposes in a special way during the Lenten Season, are suitable means for us to become conformed to this ‘gaze’.” (Pope Benedict XVI, Message for Lent 2006)

Dear Sisters, let us embrace these suitable means to become conformed to the “gaze” of the Lord! “Let us always keep our gaze on Jesus,” says Mother Pauline, “impress Jesus interiorly and exteriorly on our whole being, on our thoughts, words and actions. In all that the day brings, immediately look to Jesus.” (Retreat 1853) We will be transformed into that which we contemplate with the heart. Let us keep our gaze on the Lord so that we will become more and more a living memory of Jesus’ way of living and acting. (Cf. *Vita Consecrata*, # 22). “This implies a particular communion of love for Christ who has become the center of life and the continual source of every initiative. It is, as the Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* reminds us, an experience of sharing a special grace of intimacy. It is becoming one with him, taking on his mind and his way of life, and it is a life taken up by Christ, touched by the hand of Christ, a life where his voice is heard, a life sustained by his grace.” (Starting Afresh from Christ, # 22)

Let us be “touched” by him! Let us look at him in the Eucharist! Let us be open to his gaze in his Word, which fills us with peace and freedom, but which does not leave us in peace, on the contrary, it challenges us to bear our sisters/brothers who are “longing for joy, peace, and love.” (Cf. Pope Benedict XVI, Message for Lent 2006). “His welfare is my concern,” we hear in the above mentioned song. “If I am laden at all I am laden with sadness that everyone’s heart isn’t filled with the gladness of mutual love.”

“Consecrated life is an expression and school of love,” the Holy Father said during the Angelus on January 29 of this year. Where there is no love there is no consecrated life. How much more this applies to us who, by our name, commit ourselves to love! I cannot recommend enough the prayerful study and common sharing of the Encyclical Letter DEUS CARITAS EST in which the Holy Father speaks about Christian love. He states very clearly that love is only possible on the basis of an intimate encounter with God. The “other” becomes sister/brother when I “look on this other person not simply with my eyes and my feelings, but from the perspective of Jesus Christ. His friend is my friend. Going beyond exterior appearances, I perceive in others an interior desire for a sign of love, of concern. ... Seeing with the eyes of Christ, I can give to others much more than their outward necessities; I can give them the look of love which they crave.” (DEUS CARITAS EST, # 18)

I want to end this letter with a short story from Rabbi Moshe Leib (1745-1807) He writes: “I learned from a peasant what it means to love my fellow man. He sat together with other peasants in an inn, drinking. When the wine began to take effect he said to his neighbour: *Do you love me or don't you love me?* The other answered: *I love you very much.* The peasant replied: *You say that you love me and you do not know what I would need? If you really loved me then you would know what hurts me and the pain I have in my heart.* The other could not respond and the peasant who had asked the question was as silent as before. But I understood: Real love is to sense the needs of others and to carry their pain.”

May this Lenten Season sensitize us to perceive when we should “carry” our sister/brother. There are many opportunities during the day: a kind thought, a prayer of blessing, a friendly greeting, a hearty “Thank you,” a hidden act of kindness, a patient listening, a gesture or a word of reconciliation ... In doing this we will perceive more and more what the others need. “I must give to others not only something that is my own, but my very self; I must be personally present in my gift.” (DEUS CARITAS EST, # 34) For this may the Lord give us his blessing in a special way!

With hearty greetings from our Sisters of the Generalate community and from the formators who are here in Rome at this time,

I am in gratitude your

*Sr. Adalberto*

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Some information:

- From March 30 until April 10 Sister Cecilia and I will be in Paderborn to participate in the retreat from April 1st to the 8th. We are grateful for your accompanying prayers.
- In my Letter for Christmas I told you about “Pauline” - “Baby” as her mother had called her – who had found a home in our Margaretha Home for the Blind in Manila. On January 15 of this year she was baptized. I have added to this letter two photos which you might be very interested in viewing.
- Kevin Kincy, a prisoner on death row in Texas, with whom I have been in contact by letter for some years, expects his execution on March 29. He asks for prayer so that he will remain firm until the end. He is innocent but as a black person he has a slim chance for a reversal of the sentence. He trusts in Mother Pauline’s intercession. Let us accompany him in prayer!
- As always you can get this letter on the homepage of the Generalate: [www.sccgen.org](http://www.sccgen.org) or directly: [www.sccgen.org/supgen.html](http://www.sccgen.org/supgen.html)

Pauline on the day of her Baptism: January 15, 2006

