



+ Rome, September 26, 2009

Dear Sisters,

Before I travel to Paderborn on September 29 to conduct the visitation in the German Province I feel urged to send you a letter in order to share some reflections on Eucharistic Adoration. As we know, Adoration is an essential expression of our eucharistic spirituality and at the same time helps to deepen it.

Since the beginning of our Congregation personal and communal adoration has always been highly esteemed. Many Sisters still keep daily adoration up to this very day. The simple, pure presence before the Lord is important, not necessarily the length of time one spends in adoration. Mother Pauline is a model therein: "Before the life-giving Sacrament, I desire to love not to meditate. Here I am with you, the entire life of my soul." (Mother Pauline, 1846) To be in the presence of the Lord is for Mother Pauline comparable to the silent being together of two friends, whose "love grows although their lips are mute." (Mother Pauline, 1848) The

lover is attracted to the loved one and wants to stay with him/her "as often and as long as he/she may." (Edith Stein)

Bishop Emeritus Lettmann from Münster aptly compares Adoration with the digging of a well, to the searching for the religious "ground water table". The essential part of this "ground water table" is to bow in freedom before God's grandeur and acknowledge it. The proclamation of the early Church "Jesus Christ is Lord" finds in Adoration its adequate expression. "Wherever worship is no longer, wherever it is not a priority to pay honor to God, human realities can make no headway. We prostrate ourselves before God, who first bowed down towards us as the merciful Samaritan to help us, to save us and give us life, who knelt before us to wash our dirty feet." (Pope Benedict XVI.) In Adoration we become aware of our belonging to God, we embody and deepen it. "Adoration is the prayer *par excellence* of awe, expectation, silence, attentiveness, listening.... Adoration takes us out of ourselves and into the realm of love, the very realm in which we will be judged." (Fr. Xavier Dijon, S.J.)

The picture which I chose for this letter shows a monstrance from a church in Magdeburg. The artist shows – unusual for us - a woman, St. Mechthild von Magdeburg, who carries the monstrance and is holding it with her outstretched left arm in harmonious balance. Branches, buds and blossoms entwine around the monstrance. Two adoring angels bow on each side before the Blessed Sacrament. This monstrance shows in an impressive way the essential of our eucharistic lifestyle: To be a "Christopher", a bearer of Christ, and to make him visible to the people. Each one of us is a monstrance through which Christ wants to become visible. He wants to be adored not only in our chapels and churches but also in all with whom we live. However, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is the condition necessary to perceive the presence of God in each human being. Christ invites us to look at him in Adoration. "Look to God that you may be radiant with joy." (Psalm 34,6)

"We will become what we contemplate," I read that many years ago – a phrase that I never forgot. People who contemplate Christ (look on Christ) have a tremendous personal charism. Such people do not need words, because THE WORD, Jesus Christ, became "flesh" in them. Many Sisters who have known Mother Pauline, give witness to the significant impact that she made on others. Remembering an encounter with her, one Sister writes: "It seemed as though an ecstatic look filled her countenance. I

contemplated it with wonder and delight. That look of hers, which twenty-eight years ago had etched itself on my spirit, is still so clear in my mind that if I were a skilled artist I could paint it today.” Another Sister who met Mother Pauline as a child, writes: “Never will I forget the loving, kind face of this good Mother, although I was only nine years old at that time. We children, full of curiosity, stood at the window. We wanted to see the saintly lady, as we called her.” Another Sister remembers: “The characteristics of her ardent love for God and neighbor were impressed even on her outward appearance. Her mild, friendly eyes inspired everyone with trust. The noble expression of her face, full of spirit and vitality, testified not only to a fullness of rich, spiritual gifts, but also to the goodness of her heart.” “As a young woman in the world, I often admired her,” we read in the notes of one Sister, how she would kneel motionless for several hours on the stone floor and prayed, engrossed in God – the characteristic of a saint, a graced soul!” The Crown Prince Friedrich, later Emperor Friedrich III., should have said after an encounter with Mother Pauline: “This lady is worthy to wear a king’s crown.” Mother Pauline had “carried” Christ as in a monstrance. In this way she became a light for many people – even until today. May Mother Pauline intercede for us that we also have the grace to carry Christ into our world!

Dear Sisters, Adoration is also the place where young people can experience an encounter with Christ and where vocations for priests and religious can grow and mature. It is especially good that young people discover anew Eucharistic Adoration. I repeatedly meet women who appreciate our community for our eucharistic spirituality which has its source in the Eucharist and in Adoration and which overflows from there into our apostolic ministries. Women who want to enter do not ask how many hours they can spend in front of the computer or television; they want to know what is the source of our life. Let us not disappoint them! Although a vocation is a very personal act between the Lord who calls and the one who is called, we are also responsible that his call will not remain unheard.

I want to close this letter with a word from Pope Benedict XVI: “Let us love being with the Lord! There we can speak with him about everything. We can offer him our petitions, our concerns, our troubles, our joys, our gratitude, our disappointments, our needs and our aspirations. There we can also constantly ask him: Lord send laborers into your harvest! Help me to be a good worker in your vineyard!” (Homily during the Vespers in Altötting, September 11, 2006)

Information:

- On August 21 all Provinces celebrated the 160th anniversary of our Congregation. We looked back in gratitude on blessed and fruitful years as well as on years of concern with regard to the survival of our Congregation, especially during the time of the *Kulturkampf* and National Socialism. We can only thank, time and again, for God’s fidelity through the ups and downs of our history. I think, we can modify for ourselves the motto of the year for the priests - “Fidelity of Christ, fidelity of the priest.” Sisters from all Provinces, the Delegation, the Unit and Rome were present in Mendham for the Anniversary. We experienced in an impressive way our unity in the spirit of Mother Pauline. In my talk I used the image of the silver thistle. Its characteristics can easily be transferred to us and to our situation. At this point I want to repeat the wish that I expressed in Mendham: “Let us be like a silver thistle: precious, resistant, modest, never fading, faithful to our consecration with our roots in the charism of Mother Pauline, an instrument of God’s healing hand in our world plagued by destructive and broken relationships, a light of hope in a society in the midst of a “winter” of faith, hope and love.”

I should like to point out that some photos and my talk can be found on the homepage of the Generalate. (www.sccgen.org under “Extras” and “Superior General”).

Very impressive for all Sisters and guests in attendance was a presentation about the early years of our Congregation, presented by the novices and the two newly professed Sisters. The message for us today was unmistakable and clear and brought out very convincingly by the actors. I can't help but share with you some of the key sentences. In the first scene Mother Pauline reminded us about the day of foundation of the Congregation as well as of the difficulties of the beginnings. However, Mother Pauline never lost her characteristic confidence in God: "Despite many hardships and uncertainties we continued to place our faith in Divine Providence." Then she continued: "I encourage you to do the same. Never let fear, confusion, sufferings or the chaos and uncertainties of the times rob you of the inner treasure. God is with you, with us." During her visit to the various houses Mother Pauline does not get tired of encouraging the Sisters: "See to it that you become saints. Be bearers of light. Go to the darkest corners and bring the light that gives vision and hope. Be women of charity, women of love, Christ-like love. It is who we have been called to be. It is the heart of Christian Charity." Then followed scenes from the beginning of the *Kulturkampf*. In Germany Mother Pauline experienced the expulsion of the Sisters from most of their ministries and the closing of most of the houses. She did not give up, but met the challenge by assuming new foundations in North and South America. It was a great blessing that she could count on the generous disposition of the Sisters to venture the risk of new foundations overseas. Turning to the audience Mother Pauline said: "You must continue in that same spirit of generosity and zeal." Her final words were challenging and at the same time encouraging: "In the beginning we were but four women, willing to risk everything – ready to put all our hope in the words of Christ. *I am the light of the world and he who follows me will have the light of life*. It is not a matter of numbers, though we know the harvest is plenty. It is about HEART. It is about conviction, hope, mercy, faith. It is about a personal commitment to walk in the ways of love, to be one in mind and heart, to love as Christ loves. Be his light for the world, for those you minister to, but most especially for those you call your Sister. *Holy Father, keep in your name those-these you have given me, may they be one, as we are one.*"

A hearty thanks to our Sisters in initial formation who had identified themselves totally with the spirit of the first Sisters and had reminded us anew what is important in our life.

- We received a special gift from the Chilean Province on the occasion of the 160th anniversary of our Congregation: 160 Holy Masses, 16 from each house, which will be celebrated during these weeks and months for all the Sisters. A sincere thanks to Sister María de los Angeles and all Sisters of the Province.
- From September 29 to December 1st Sister Angelika and I will be in the German Province for visitation. Usually I can always be reached by e-mail. I recommend the time of visitation in a special way to your prayers.

With hearty greetings, also from the Sisters of Villa Paolina,

I am your grateful

Sr. Adalberto