



+ Mendham, August 14, 2008

Dear Sisters,

On our walking tours and mountain hikes during my vacation in the Allgäu near the Alps I saw many springs, mountain creeks and cascades. Time and again I watched the current of the water as it curled through big and small rocks. I was fascinated by the clear water of the creeks and rivers in which I could look to the ir rock bottom. I could see countless big and small stones which were washed and polished by the force of the water, perhaps for already thousands of years. I couldn't help thinking about a story from India "The Stone in the Water", with which I want to begin this letter.

*An old man who was considered very wise once walked on the Himalaya mountains. On his way towards a monastery located in the plain he passed snow-covered peaks. The way led him along a mountain creek, which ran over rocks and through dry grassland.*

*The water of the creek was crystal clear; it smelled fresh and gave off a cool feeling. The sun reflected itself in the rough water which poured bubbling towards the valley. The water danced playfully around stones and grass, and the gurgling and murmuring sounds of the creek penetrated the silent solitude of the mountains.*

*As he walked, bright pebbles in the creek attracted his attention. He wondered how many years they might have already been in the water, having been carried along and smoothed, having rubbed one another? The man thought to himself: Time is flowing like a current over these little, round stones. For a long time he gazed at the creek and found more and more pebbles.*

*He sat down near the creek and observed how the stones were washed around by the clear, fresh water. He bent over and picked up a little bright pebble from the creek. It seemed as if the stone was glowing in the sun. The water drops were sparkling; the humidity felt pleasant. The wise man rolled the round stone in his hand.*

*Suddenly the man had an idea. I have to see, he said to himself, whether the stone is also so smooth and wet on the inside. He broke the stone on a rock near him. And look, the little pebble split, but inside it was completely dry. The wise man became pensive. He sat there lost in thought.*

*There is the stone in the water for years, and it did not get wet inside. Only its outside is wet and smooth. But inside it is dry and rough. It cannot be the fault of the water, the wise man thought: it is fresh and clear and it renews itself continuously. Perhaps the surface of the stone is too hard so that the water cannot penetrate.*

*The wise man continued to reflect. This is the same with Christianity. Looking exteriorly, Christians accept the teaching of the Church; within it has no effect; there it is dry and does not touch the heart. It is not the fault of Christianity, its message is fresh and clear. Perhaps, like the surface of the bright pebble, the minds and hearts of many Christians are just too hard and too polished.*



I think, this story speaks for itself - to us as community and to each one of us personally. It's no use to lament the dwindling faith and ineffectiveness of Christianity, if we do not ask ourselves honestly: Did the Word of God, which is reflected in our charism, only "wash around" us without touching our heart, or do we accept, time and again, its transforming force? Our founding day, which we will celebrate in a few days, can animate us to ask ourselves to what extent Mother Pauline's charism of "active love of neighbor, emanating from the fire of God's love" is truly our "soul and our life." "Sisters of Christian Charity: That is to be no empty title" (Article 7). What Mother Pauline had expressed in Article 7 of our Constitutions in a language rich in imagery is, so to say, "translated" in Chapter V, Community Life, and Chapter VI, Mission and Ministry, into how we are to live our concrete daily life. We cannot contemplate and consider these articles enough, dear Sisters, opening our hearts wide, so that the Spirit of Jesus Christ "permeates us and manifests itself in our whole being." (Article 5) That is the basis for the "reconfiguration of the heart". Let us ask the Lord for his Spirit, so that everything that has hardened us and is rigid – often hidden – will break open so that we can be "so on fire with Christ's love that we carry his light out into our world." (Document of the 2007 General Chapter)

*Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, your message is as clear as the spring water of a mountain torrent. Your words "wash around" us during our entire life. Your Good News is supporting and healing when it reaches the heart.*

*But sometimes we are hard like pebbles or so smooth so that your message passes over us; we can be so hard that your words do not penetrate us; so polished that your message of God's love does not reach our heart.*

*Send us your Spirit so that he breaks through our hard shell. Send us your Spirit that he touches our heart. Send us your Spirit that he will fill our heart with the life of God. Only in this way can the Word of God become effective and transform the world. (Paul Jakobi)*

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Information:

- In gratitude I will celebrate this year's founding day with our Sisters in Mendham. I am also glad that I can be present for the First Vows of Sister Amy Segal on August 16 as well as for the investing of Postulant Linda Ferdico on August 20.
- On August 22 I will travel to Wilmette to spend one week there with the Sisters. My return trip to Rome is planned for August 29.

I wish all of us a happy and blessed founding day. We all have reason to thank God that we can experience Mother Pauline until today as a constant companion, and that she – as the 2007 Chapter Document says - "is with us on our way over Holy Ground into the future."

With hearty greetings also from our Sisters of the N.A. Eastern Province, I am

Your

*Sr. Adalberto*