



We remember,  
we thank,  
we trust...

+ Rome, August 10, 2009

Dear Sisters,

WE REMEMBER – WE THANK – WE TRUST... Past, present and future are passing us by like a flash. Since April 30 we have received an insight into the ups and downs of the 160-year history of our Congregation. This insight shows us that both the founding and the continuity of the Congregation are God's work. That gives us enough reason to celebrate and to thank: first for God's guidance which is very evident up until today, and then for Mother Pauline who responded generously to God's call to live a life of Christ-like love.

**REMEMBRANCE – GRATITUDE - CONFIDENCE.** Still today we are impressed with how Mother Pauline expressed remembrance, gratitude and confidence in her spiritual diary on the evening of August 21, 1874.

*August 21, 1874 - Feast of St. Jane Frances de Chantal and my twenty-fifth anniversary as a religious. What a sad day it was with our beloved Bishop in prison! The Sisters outdid themselves in trying to prove their love and kindness to me; it was really touching. I, on my part, had to force myself to overcome my feelings of depression and sadness. The Sisters really went all out in their efforts to show me signs of loving attention and in giving me gifts. Among the latter the one which gave me most joy was a little slip of paper on which, from his prison cell, our Most Rev. Bishop had conveyed to me his blessing.*

*With deepest gratitude to the dear Lord I thought of the countless blessings I had received from God during these twenty-five years. I cannot find words to express to Him my gratitude for my vocation to the religious life. May He grant me the grace to live a holy religious life and then one day to die a blessed death.* (Volume 25 of Mother Pauline's Writings)

Remembrance, gratitude and confidence are the focal point of this short entry. In the review of the day Mother Pauline first of all recalls with heavy heart the painful event of the arrest of Bishop Konrad Martin which had happened just a few days before. She does not deny her feelings of depression and sadness. But in spite of her personal concerns and the concern she has with regard to the continuity of the Congregation she remains open and grateful for all the expressions of love and attention that the Sisters gave her. She closes her diary on her jubilee day giving thanks to God for the many gifts which she and the whole Congregation had received during the past 25 years as well as with an expression of confidence that God will complete the work which he has begun.

**WE REMEMBER.** The first jubilee day of the Congregation coincided, as Mother Pauline indicates in her notes, with the anticlerical time of the Kulturkampf. The foundation in North America took place one year before. The travel of 12 Sisters to Chile would be realized soon. How much preparation and planning had been necessary to accomplish all these things: getting information; traveling to the necessary offices; writing letters to government officials, bishops, parish priests; choosing and preparing the Sisters; accompanying them to the harbors of Bremen or Rotterdam; saying

farewell to them! We can hardly imagine the effort that she needed for all of this. In addition the health of Mother Pauline was already weakened. In November 1867 she had a kind of seizure. She wrote: "The condition of my health is such that the doctor said I could avoid a nervous breakdown only if I took care of myself." (Notes of Mother Pauline, Volume 25) In November 1870 she was again alarmingly ill. "On the morning of November 23, 1870, in the room St. Chantal I collapsed. It might have been weakness or a slight stroke." (Volume 25) It is almost a miracle that Mother Pauline, in spite of her delicate health, had endured the hard blows of the Kulturkampf. It shows us her inner strength flowing from the Eucharist.

**WE REMEMBER – WE THANK** It was a great joy for the Sisters to receive a photo of Mother Pauline on the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> jubilee. On August 10, 1874 Mother Pauline writes to some Sisters:

*Our kind Most Reverend Bishop put me under obligation to have my picture taken and to see that you, dear Sisters, are in possession of one on the feast of St. Frances de Chantal, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the foundation of our beloved Congregation. I cannot deny that I think Sister Anna and Sister Juliana are the instigators of this formal command.*

*I have acquiesced to the wish of the Most Reverend Bishop, and since it is not possible for me to be personally in your midst on this day, although it would certainly be an indescribable pleasure, to thank the dear Lord with you for all the kindness and blessings He has bestowed upon us during this long time, I can at least be with you with my picture.*

*May each of us make the firm resolution today, to strive for true sanctity, then we shall have all eternity to be united, and never be separated again.* (Volume 16 of Mother Pauline's Writings)

I think that up to today we are grateful to the "instigators" that we have at least one original photo of Mother Pauline. She, herself, did not want to have her photo taken, but she was glad for her Sisters that in this way she could be among them.

But more important than the photo is Mother Pauline's example for which we cannot be grateful enough. Her life of holiness is for us a gift and at the same time a task. Time and again she urges the Sisters in her letters to "strive for true holiness." This plea is not a thing of the past. Holiness is an essential part of the life of a Christian and even more so of that of a Religious. We are challenged to make holiness our life's goal. A life of holiness, following the example of Mother Pauline, has to be a characteristic of each of us as Sisters of Christian Charity – a holiness in which we mature in our likeness to Jesus, growing ever more in conformity with his attitude. "Grant, O Jesus, that your image be formed in me, that I live only from you and in you and with you – you the vine and I the branch." These words of Mother Pauline are familiar to us, and we have to "translate" them time and again into our life.

Our gratitude embraces also all the Sisters with whom we have lived, who have formed us and strengthened us in our vocation. Each one of us could mention many names, names of Sisters who went before us and who at the same time continue to journey with us. They left inextinguishable marks in us, marks of joy, hope and love, of justice and peace.

We also thank God for each Sister with whom we live today. Each one is a gift and a treasure for our community. Each Sister has to be important for us, each one is part of us. On this occasion I thank each one of you for the gift of your life, a life lived according Mother Pauline's charism.

**WE REMEMBER – WE THANK – WE TRUST.** Retrospect and gratitude strengthen our confidence, the hope that in the future God will also be with us. In a world in which many people, mainly young ones, see only a little or no sense in their life, it is our mission to be bearers of hope. We are called to hope and joy, and the view of the history of our Congregation can strengthen us in that. Our hope is in Jesus Christ, and that distinguishes it from all purely human stories of hope. Our hope reaches out beyond the earthly reality. There are many signs of hope. One is the living of the evangelical counsels

with which we dare to let behind mere earthly hopes. Another important sign of hope today is our relationship with one another and our hospitality. The atmosphere of our convents and our lifestyle can also be inviting signs of hope; however, they can also be the contrary, when we carry with us superfluous “tassels and trains.” It is important that we see our Sisters in community both as a gift and as a task. As a gift, we recognize that the other is called just as I, and I may rejoice in that. As a task, I have the opportunity to practice with the other(s) encounter, encouragement, team work, interactive skills, and in situations of conflict, reconciliation. “If we as Religious could manage a little better this art of love, then our signs of hope would again be ‘readable,’ our net of hope would be stronger and our communities would be more authentic bearers of hope.” (Msgr. Bertram Meier)

**WE REMEMBER - WE THANK- WE TRUST.** Our jubilee will not romanticize the past. We have to orient ourselves to the message of Jesus and the action of the Holy Spirit. We have to preserve his message. Structures, exterior things can and must change in order to give witness to the Gospel today. To remember our history which we see as the story of God with us, encourages and strengthens us for action today and tomorrow – for the good of those who are entrusted to us.

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Information:

- During the past months our Generalate community increased time and again. We could welcome successively Sisters from Chile and Argentina, then from Germany, followed by the group of younger Sisters and finally six Sisters from the Eastern Province. I thank all Sisters who accepted the invitation for the renewal program or for the meeting with the younger Sisters. I want to thank my councilors who guided the courses and accompanied the Sisters on their pilgrimage in Rome and Paderborn. I express my gratitude also to the Sisters of our community who did everything so that the various groups could feel at home. The encounter with the various groups helped all to get to know each other better and also strengthened the mutual bond of unity. – I also want to thank the Provincial Council and the Sisters of the German Province who made the stay of the Sisters from overseas an unforgettable experience.
- It is impossible for the jubilarians of this year to answer all the letters of congratulations. Therefore they have asked me to thank you for all the signs of sisterly love and bonds of unity, especially for your prayers and your remembrance during the celebration of the Eucharist.
- In August Sister Andrea Weidner, having committed herself for three years in Campo Santo, will return to her home Province (Eastern Province). In the name of the community of Campo Santo and also of our Generalate community I want to express our hearty thanks for her selfless service. May God be with her on her future path of life. – A replacement for Sister Andrea is intended, probably for November or December of this year. Sister Mariana Mateo from the Uruguayan-Argentinean Delegation is ready to assume services in the college for priests. Because she already has a satisfactory knowledge of the German language she is qualified for a ministry in Campo Santo. We are very grateful to Sister Mariana for her Yes. – A hearty thanks to Sister María Angelina Rivarola who assumed the office as treasurer.
- On August 13 I will again travel to Mendham in order to participate in the celebration of the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of our Congregation. The celebration in the Motherhouse has a special character insofar as Sisters from every Province as well as from our Delegation and Unit will be present. I thank Sister Joan Daniel and the Provincial Council for the invitation. May the Lord make fruitful the blessings of the past 160 years and so provide for the vital future of our Congregation.

I wish you, dear Sisters, a blessed Feast of the Assumption of Mary and a grace-filled founding day. Let us celebrate, united in gratitude and joy for God’s guidance during the past 160 years and in confidence that he is with us on the way also in the future. With many greetings from the Sisters of our Generalate community I am your grateful

*Sr. Adalberto*