



+ Rome, November 30, 2010

Dear Sisters,

During the weeks of Advent the Liturgy highlights in a special way three great figures: Isaiah, John the Baptist and Mary. Without diminishing their importance I want, with this letter, to place St. Joseph at their side and show that he is a true Advent figure. He is a saint into whose life God stepped time and again, and yet who was so often “in the shadows”. During Advent he is mentioned only twice (on December 8 and 18); nevertheless, it is just he who can give light to the true meaning of Advent as a period of longing, vigilance, contemplative listening, of faith in the promise of God and as a time of setting off towards Bethlehem.

The impressive bronze figure of St. Joseph by Hilde Schürk-Frisch can make the person of Joseph better known to us. It is a very different representation of him than those familiar to us. The artist shows Joseph as the prototype of a listening person who is ready to set off on a journey. He is all ears. With his left hand he makes the ear conch larger in order to listen with much concentration to God’s order. Joseph listens with his heart. He hears, he listens and he obeys. The staff in his hand indicates that he is ready to set off, to set off into the darkness of God whom we can never comprehend. His life reflects the readiness to let himself be led by someone else to where he would not choose to go. (Cf. John 21:18) In his dream he hears God’s voice: “Take Mary as your wife into your home!” “Rise and go!” Joseph hears and acts. He believes in the promise of God and gives up his own plan of life. Therefore, we can place him among the long line of witnesses of faith whom St. Paul names in the Letter to the Hebrews.

Joseph holds an essential role in the events of Advent and Christmas and even far beyond. His attitude of listening to God’s will and his readiness to risk the impossible and to go the way which God orders him to go are also essential for our consecrated life. When we practice the attitude of Joseph at least a little, then we will be ready for the mystery of the radical new beginning that God wanted to make with the Birth of Jesus. St. Joseph can give us an orientation for our own way of life, “so that God himself can enter into our life and that incarnation can happen in us, so that we may discover the power of the Spirit in us in order to do our part in bringing God into the world. In light of the current crises in the world, in society, in the Church and often in our own life it is especially essential today to keep all in perspective, to remain forward-looking and not to be ashamed of hope.” (Bishop Franz-Josef Bode) I want to close with an Advent impulse:

Turn around, otherwise everything remains as it is!
Turn around, otherwise nothing will change!
Turn around, otherwise you will see everything from the wrong angle!
Turn around, otherwise you will miss the most important!
Turn around, otherwise you will not see God!
Turn around, otherwise you will miss the incarnation!
Turn around, otherwise you will overlook the stable!
Turn around, otherwise you will not find the child in the manger!

Bertold Kraning

Information:

- The Jubilarians of this year have asked me to express their gratitude for all the signs of unity which they have received from every Province, the Delegation and the Unit. The numerous written greetings, material gifts, but mainly your prayers and the Eucharistic celebration added to the festive joy of the Jubilarians. For my part I thank the Sisters for their many years of faithfulness to their vocation – years of blessings for our Congregation.
- In this context I want to thank you for all the congratulations I received on my Birthday. In my gratitude to God for the gift of life you have been included.
- On November 11 the Vatican published the Post-Synodal Exhortation “Verbum Domini”. I especially recommend that you read the second and third part. With regard to the consecrated life Pope Benedict XVI writes: “A life devoted to following Christ in his chastity, poverty and obedience is a living ‘exegesis’ of God’s word... Every charism and every rule springs from it and seeks to be an expression of it.” (Verbum Domini, # 83)
- In the N.A. Eastern Province Sr. Joan Daniel Healy has been re-nominated as Provincial Superior. The nomination of the Councilors will follow soon. I thank Sr. Joan Daniel that she is ready to resume the guidance of the Province for another term of four years.
- From December 9 to 20 Sr. Joan Daniel and I will visit our Sisters in the Philippines. I recommend these travels to your prayers, dear Sisters. Since the end of August Sr. Annelyth Pandi is a member of the local community in the Philippines. She is a native of the Philippines, but entered our Congregation in Mendham. She has been ministering in the States as a teacher for several years. Her main ministry now is vocation ministry. I am very grateful that she carries out this service with great readiness and enthusiasm.
- A point of information with regard to the process of Canonization of Mother Pauline: The case from the United States which had been presented for study to the Congregation for Saints was approved by only one medical doctor; two did not approve it. Therefore we had to give up this case. Our Postulator has begun to take up the case which happened in 1993 in Montevideo. According to the conviction of a prominent eye specialist this case has a good chance of being recognized. But the fund for Canonization is almost used up and will be enough probably only for the process in Montevideo. If we do not have any donors the process cannot be continued in Rome. Furthermore with the growing medical sciences it is becoming ever more difficult to declare a healing of a sickness as medically unexplainable. But that is the condition for the recognition of a “miracle.”

I think Mother Pauline’s life is the real miracle, her life that even until today has not lost any of its charism. Let us not forget: Mother Pauline lives in God; with a Canonization no greater beatitude will be bestowed on her. A Canonization has mainly a legal character in the sense that Mother Pauline could be venerated in the universal Church. Above all, what is most important is that we fulfil Mother Pauline’s desire which she so often wrote and said: “Become holy!”

Dear Sisters, let us go with Mary and Joseph towards Bethlehem! Let us kneel down – in fact or in spirit - before the incarnated love of God, before this God who later will himself kneel down before us! Then we can return from the manger to our daily life. “Who has found Jesus in the manger returns different from the person who came. He/she has changed and is encouraged for what will come.” (Bishop Franz-Josef Bode) That is my wish and my prayer for the coming Christmas.

Gratefully yours

Sr. Adalberto