



+ Rome, March 28, 2010

Dear Sisters,

We have reached the last week of Lent. The Feast of Easter, for which we have been joyfully preparing (cf. Letter of February 19, 2010), is almost here. The Liturgy during Holy Week invites us to go with Jesus on the way of his Passion. Each year that is a new and great challenge. But in our hearts the light of Easter morning is already rising. The Passion Story according to Luke, which we heard on Palm Sunday, shows us the hidden light which illuminates the night of Passion.

With this letter I want to point out one characteristic aspect of the Easter stories that we perhaps do not often consider: searching for the Risen Christ. First we hear from Mary Magdalene. Early in the morning she goes to the tomb in

order to be with her Beloved, even though he is dead. But the tomb is empty. *"He is not here"*. Where is he? Mary Magdalene – and we with her – must learn that God can never be found there where we think we should find him. *"Why do you seek the living one among the dead?"* (Cf. Luke 24:5) Jesus died outside the walls. In order to see the Easter sun, the Risen Christ, we have to step out from the "walls" of our inner darkness.

In her affliction Mary Magdalene runs to Peter and John to notify them that they had taken the Lord from the tomb. Immediately both set off and hurry to the tomb. They want to seek Jesus or at least see a sign from him. John arrives first at the grave. He sees the burial cloths and that is enough for him to believe: Jesus lives. Peter sees the same signs and *"he went home amazed"* (cf. Luke 24:12). His faith needs time. Mary Magdalene, Peter and John have one thing in common: They seek Jesus. The Risen Christ gives them and the other disciples signs, meets them, walks with them, instructs them, and little by little they recognize him. *"Rabboni!"* (John 20:16) *"My Lord and my God!"* (John 20:28) *"It is the Lord."* (John 21:7)

Where do we seek Jesus? Do we have the same zeal to find the Risen Christ? St. Benedict specifies three criteria in the light of which we can prove whether we do seek God through Jesus Christ:

- the readiness to let our daily life be shaped by common and personal prayer, by listening to the Word of God and by giving answer to it;
- the readiness to let oneself be challenged by the community and to support the community positively and with a joyful heart;
- the readiness to accept situations of strain and to master them together with one another without immediately abandoning the common way.

The motto of St. Ignatius is "To seek and find God in all things," a motto which shaped Mother Pauline's life very concretely and which she also urged the Sisters to follow. Mother Pauline found God in the midst of her daily life, be it in the encounter with Jesus Christ in the Eucharistic Celebration or in the contemplative adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, be it in those with whom she lived and worked, or be it in the needy of her time.

To seek God in the needy – that was also one aspect which Pope John Paul II underlined in his homily on the occasion of Mother Pauline's Beatification on April 14, 1985. *"The life of*

Mother Pauline is an example to us. In answer to the anxious unrest of modern man she shows us a way to inner peace: by courageously and trustingly seeking God in one's suffering brother and sister. Thus her message has relevance today too, for the search for God is always relevant." (You can find the homily in the homepage of the Generalate under Chronicles).

To seek God in our suffering brother and sister remains our lifelong task – as individuals and as community. Especially in painful situations the question, -"Where is God?"- comes to us. In such situations it is necessary that we help one another. We need each other to recognize God in our "suffering brother and sister." The 25th anniversary of the Beatification of Mother Pauline and her Feast on April 30 can make us conscious anew of the mission which is entrusted to us as Sisters of Christian Charity. I think, as we consider the situation of our sisters and brothers in Chile who have been hit very hard by the earthquakes, this mission has already affected us deeply in the core of our heart and has impelled us to immediate action. Mother Pauline is a model especially in serving the needy. For her, seeking God is closely connected with direct help for our "suffering brother and sister." *"See to it that no one has to wait long at our doors. The poor should be served, should receive care without delay, and they should never be made to feel that they are a burden. For it is Jesus Christ himself who stands before us."* (Retreat 1854)

Mother Pauline is and remains a challenge and an example for us and for the many who venerate her and who want to live her charism. In this sense the church *"will never finish with the beatification of one of her outstanding children,"* as Auxiliary Bishop Hans Leo Drewes from Paderborn said during the festivities after the Beatification, and he continues: *"On the contrary: The mystery of grace-filled greatness of people who are chosen by God reveals itself ever more deeply through their veneration which animates us at all times. In that sense a Beatification is only a distinctive moment, important enough in order to perceive in faith the greatness of the community of Saints now and hereafter."*!

Information:

- The new foundation in Bolivia, that I had mentioned in my letter of December 16, 2009, will begin immediately after Easter. On April 6, Sister María de los Angeles together with the Sisters who are assigned for the new ministry – Sister Ingrid Sánchez, Sister Sofía Cerda and Sister Celina Raquel Ladrón de Guevara – will travel to Puerto Suárez, a fast growing city, where pastoral service is urgently necessary. Let us pray for the Sisters who said Yes to this new beginning, a beginning which fills all of us with joy. Let us thank the Chilean Province and the Uruguay-Argentinean Delegation for the readiness to give Sisters for this mission.
- On April 8 I will travel to Chile and stay for about ten days in order to get a little better insight into the effects of the grave earthquake. During the first days the local media reported very much about it, but the countless aftershocks are hardly mentioned any longer, although they still have an intensity of more than 6, and close to 7, on the Richter scale. Most important for me is just to be among the Sisters who are most affected. The material damages are immense. However, even graver, is the physical and psychological impact on the people, and our Sisters are not exempted. The constant fear of aftershocks prevents them from sleeping or at least only very little. There is no water, no electricity. The communication per telephone, cell phone and Internet is still partly interrupted. All that intensifies the feeling of being left alone, although that was and is not the case. From the first moment on we in the Generalate experienced a great readiness of solidarity in desiring to offer help to Chile, and for that I thank all of you, dear Sisters. When Sr. Maria de los

Angeles comes to Rome for the Enlarged Council Meeting we will consider where help is urgently needed. Above all it is important that we continue to pray for the people in Chile that they do not lose hope and that they confidently begin with the reconstruction. (You can see photos from the earthquake on the website of the Generalate)

- The gathering with the coordinators and the representatives of our Companions of Pauline here in Rome and then in Paderborn was a very important step in the context of the future planning of our Congregation. We Sisters appreciate with gratitude the answer of the associates to God's call to live Mother Pauline's charism in their respective lifestyle. At the same time this is a challenge for us Sisters to form our life more and more profoundly by our charism so that it will remain attractive for the people of our time. I ask you, dear Sisters, to support the task of the coordinators and to foster the specific vocation of the lay people for our Congregation.
- From May 7 to 11 I will take part in the UISG Plenary Session that takes place every three years in Rome. Superiors General from all over the world gather for this Meeting.
- From May 14 to 30 I will be in the German Province in order to conduct the course, "Spirituality of Letting Go," for two groups.

Dear Sisters, the Risen Christ greeted his disciples time and again with: "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." (John 20:21) Let us be ready to be sent daily anew and in this way to continue his mission to bring peace.

With hearty Easter greetings, also from the Provincial Superiors who are right now in Rome, and the Sisters of Villa Paolina,

I am your grateful

Sr. Adalberto