



To cooperate with God
is our human dignity.
God desires our heart,
our freedom,
our will.

Mother Pauline, 1849

+ Rome, November 4, 2010

160th Anniversary of Mother Pauline's First Profession

Dear Sisters,

First of all I want to thank all of you very much for your prayers that accompanied us during the visitation of the Eastern Province. It was a full and blessed time for Sr. DeSales and for me. I look back with gratitude on each encounter with the sisters. But I am also glad to be back in Villa Paolina, at least for some weeks.

With this letter I want to refer to one aspect of my circular letter from April 5: the promotion and support of vocation ministry.

But what is a vocation? It is God's call to every human being. God has a plan for everyone that we, ourselves, must discover. In doing so God respects our freedom with regard to our decision. He forces no one to follow the destination which he has placed into the heart of each one. The detail of Michelangelo's "The creation of Adam" shows that in an impressive way. The dignity of every human being consists in cooperating in freedom with God. "The answer that one gives to the call, the unconditional attitude with which one accepts the call and one's fidelity to it, is important. Our vocation does not constitute holiness, but it is the fidelity with which we fulfill it." (Madeleine Debr el)

In this letter I want to reflect on the question with regard to the expectations of young people who feel called to follow Christ more closely and who want to join a religious community. A recently published study, commissioned by the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) to a University in the USA can give us valuable directions. 4000 younger members who entered during the last 15 years were surveyed. In Mendham on October 24, Brother Paul Bednarczyk, CSC, Executive Director of the National Religious Vocation Conference, gave a report about the results of the study. The results are also representative of other countries, as I can confirm by my observances and conversations with our younger Sisters.

Daily participation in the Eucharist is, for the interviewed members, self-evident. They also treasure the common Liturgy of the Hours and times of adoration. They want to live in convents of at least four to seven members and they wish regular faith sharing. Most of the younger members prefer congregations in which they can minister together with other

members in a ministry sponsored by the institute. It is also informative that the majority of the interviewed members chose a community in which the members normally wear the religious dress as a sign of consecration, poverty and belonging to a certain community, though exceptions are not excluded.

Dear Sisters, it is important to listen to our younger members, to their dreams, expectations, perspectives for the future without disassociating them from reality. "The force of aging and decline may keep us from hearing the interest of young people who would be ready to commit to the charism of our institutes if we are willing to give them a clear sense of mission in community while respecting their religious needs instead of seeking to make them clones of ourselves." (Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin) Those congregations who have given priority to the vocation ministry and who have been proactive with regard to it can record an increase of younger members. These communities have invested a significant effort into vocational ministry: nominating a fulltime vocation director, using the media, especially the Internet, providing financial support, developing an action plan which includes every Sister. It is very important to invite young people in order to give them the opportunity to get to know us. The personal encounters cannot be replaced by anything else. Young people want to see how we live, how we pray, how we deal with one another. They want to experience religious who radiate joy and who still after 40, 50 or even 80 years can say that they are grateful for each day of religious life. I think much of what I have mentioned affirms the initiatives taken by our Congregation.

Dear Sisters, God has entrusted to our Congregation a future oriented charism for which we are responsible. Let us take courageous and innovative ways! Certainly we all want vocations. New members will come when we are convinced of the actuality of our charism, a charism that still today has the power to be leaven and can still turn our society, characterized by a loss of meaning, upside down. The vocational ministry should be for all of us a heartfelt concern. I am pleased with all of your efforts concerning vocation ministry, and I can only encourage you to continue in the same way.. The Church and our Congregation need the energy, the enthusiasm and the dreams of the youth as well as the wisdom, fidelity and sound tradition of the elderly members. We need one another in order to be signs of "unbounded generosity and love, and this all the more so in a world which risks being suffocated in the whirlpool of the ephemeral." (Vita Consecrata, 105)

I wish all of you God's blessings. With many greetings, also from the Sisters of our community in Villa Paolina,

I am gratefully your

Sr. Adalberto