

To All the Sisters

Dearest Sisters,

Many appointments await us at the end of November: the Feast of Blessed James Alberione and the audience of the Pauline Family with the Pope, the conclusion of the Centenary Year of the PF and the opening of the Year of Consecrated Life, which will initiate with a prayer vigil on 29 November, and last but not least, the beginning of Advent. It seems to me that these events renew in us above all the invitation to *keep watch* so as to contemplate the Lord living and working in history, and also so as to *scrutinize* the signs of the times.¹ One *keeps watch* at night and during this vigil we are often able to perceive almost tangibly the darkness that enwraps our world. We are called to *keep watch* prayerfully, interceding for everyone, opening our hearts to welcome the Lord Jesus, who comes irresistibly and fills us with steadfast and luminous hope.

Keeping watch means keeping the memory of our call vibrantly alive; it involves "refreshing the memory of that moment in which his gaze met mine; the moment in which I experienced his love for me" (Pope Francis). Consecration is not the result of our efforts; it is an absolutely free gift of God.

To *keep watch* so as to return to the source of our charism with the heart of Fr. Alberione, who wrote in 1949: "The light of the Lord is growing always brighter. It was the will of God for us to accomplish what we did." And when he was eighty years old: "God accomplished his ends in spite of the fact that I was a useless servant instead of a builder."

To *keep watch* so as to respond to the unexpected calls of the Lord who, already in the Old Testament, mysteriously guided the journey of his people by means of a cloud of light and fire—one that advanced according to a rhythm that called for considerable obedience (cf. Nm. 9:22). It is moving to note Fr. Alberione's continual efforts to journey in step with the divine pace, aware that he was a half-blind person guided by God, a cheap pen charged with transmitting to others the project entrusted to him: "I have to give you spiritual goods that the Lord wants to pass on to you through my hands.... I have neither silver nor gold, but I give you what I received...seeking to bring to completion the divine will for you" (CVV 68).

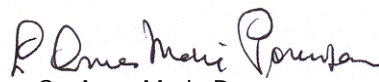
To *keep watch* so as to reappropriate our Pauline identity, which the Founder explained so well: "Apostles who burn with love for God thanks to their intimate spiritual life," always "on the move...bearers of Christ, living and operative members of the Church."

Let us get ready to begin the Year of Consecrated Life and our Centenary with open hearts and attentive ears so that our personal and community lives will be guided by the "cloud" of the Spirit; so as to seek the active presence of the Lord in our story, like sentinels who keep the desire for God alive in the world and reawaken this desire in the hearts of many people (cf. *Scrutinize* 2, 13, 17). On our 50th anniversary of foundation, Fr. Alberione said with emphasis: "Now you have reached all the continents.... Your word echoes everywhere. Continue to raise your voice always more. Teach!"

And while our hearts are already looking ahead to the audience with Pope Francis, we want to rekindle within us the profound love for the Church that prompted Blessed Paul VI to write: "Perhaps the Lord called me and keeps me in this service not so much because I have the aptitude for it...but so that I can suffer something for the Church and so that it will be clear that it is he and no one else who guides and saves it."

May you all have a good Advent and a good Year of Consecrated Life. May the Spirit give us the prophecy that proclaims to the world the joy of the Gospel.

Affectionately,



Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan
Superior General

¹ I suggest a prayerful reading of *Scrutinize*, the second letter of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, published by the Vatican Press, and which can also be found on www.vidimusdominum.org.