

Dearest sisters and young women in formation,

Two weeks ago we ended our Interchapter Meeting, a time of immense grace for the whole Congregation. *Moved by the Spirit*, we came to understand more clearly the need to persevere in listening obediently to the Lord so as to allow his Word, dwelling within us, to “explode” with all its transforming power. This profound interior transformation is both a *gift* and a *commitment*: it is a daily *gift* offered to us by Christ, whom we meet in the Word and in the Eucharist, in the signs of the times, in the weaknesses of our human condition, and in the “dark nights” of the world; and it is also a *commitment* to living “in a state of conversion,” as people who have been saved, so as to be channels of grace through which God’s action and mercy can flow.

Fr. Alberione said that we cannot be channels unless we are first of all “basins”: “A basin has to be filled before its contents can be poured out. First it must be filled...” (FSP41, p. 272). Only in this way does history have meaning; only then does it become “salvation history”—a place and space of hope.

What more favorable time to live this itinerary than Lent? Our journey toward Easter is “paved” with the Word. We and all believers are invited to follow this path—one with distinctly baptismal connotations this year—with our gaze fixed on the luminous horizon of the resurrection.

In his *Message for Lent 2011*, Benedict XVI speaks about the particular connection between Baptism and Lent, “the favorable time to experience this saving grace.” This connection can be clearly seen in the many “baptismal elements proper to the Lenten Liturgy” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 109) and in the custom of associating this sacrament with the Easter Vigil. “[Baptism],” the Holy Father writes, “realizes the great mystery in which the human being dies to sin, is made a sharer in the new life of the risen Christ and receives the same Spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead.”

St. Paul explains what it means to participate in this new life that grafts us onto the life of Christ through Baptism. And Fr. Alberione tells us how to make this grafting operative: “[Let us] reflect on what it means to graft ourselves onto Christ the Master. [Let us] meditate on what he did and how he lived.... ‘You, who were a wild olive tree, have been grafted onto a cultivated, healthy and perfect olive tree’ (cf. Rm. 11:24). Let us graft our head, our heart, our mind, our activities, our works and our whole apostolate onto Christ” (FSP-SdC, p. 262).

The Pope says that we must continually revive the gift of our baptism. In view of this, let us allow ourselves to be guided by the Word and the Liturgies of this season—above all the Sunday Gospels—so as to discover the baptismal foundation of our special consecration. In fact, “through Baptism, the Father has chosen us to live in his Son” and “has consecrated us to himself more intimately to send us to proclaim the unfathomable riches of the mystery of Christ” (Const. 4).

In the study aid, *May Christ Arise in Us! Moving Toward Easter*, the members of the Commission for Animation on the Constitutions wisely suggest that we follow a 3-stage itine-

rary that takes as its point of departure the Lenten Liturgy of the universal Church. This itinerary encourages us to meditate on the following points and *put them into practice*:

1. "Have a contrite heart" (*Be sorry for sin*): "to allow Christ to set us on his path—a path that involves change, transformation, re-creation, transfiguration";
2. "Live in a receptive attitude to the Lord who speaks" (*From here I want to enlighten*), by listening to the Word and meditating on it faithfully every day, and by fidelity to the Eucharist—celebrated, adored and lived;
3. "Witness to the crucified and risen Christ" (*Do not be afraid. I am with you*), because "the proclamation of the resurrection takes place through witnesses who, in the midst of darkness, learn to welcome the light of Easter."

This itinerary, which admirably complements our journey to "reappropriate" the Constitutions and reflect more deeply on our identity in the light of our charismatic heritage, can be further illuminated by the reflections on the Sunday Gospel readings for Lent posted on our www.paoline.org web site.

Dear sisters, it was not by chance that I used the phrase "put into practice" a few moments ago. Christian tradition encourages Christians to cultivate more deeply the practice of prayer, fasting and sharing during Lent. Jesus himself recommended the same thing in his Sermon on the Mount because these practices are necessary if we want to remove all the idols from our life. "Prayer means depriving ourselves of time so as to give it to God; fasting means depriving ourselves of food so as to strip ourselves; and sharing means depriving ourselves of possessions so as to help the needy" (E. Bianchi).

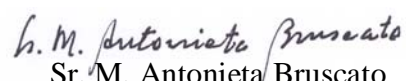
May each one of us dedicate ourselves with love and responsibility to these practices: in particular, let us set aside a little more time for God so as to listen to his Word, make room for it in our lives, and allow it to work in and through us. We will truly celebrate Easter only when our entire existence becomes the "place" in which Christ rises to new life.

Throughout the world, all the FSPs are making a great effort as individuals and communities to make the Word the center of our life and mission. During the Interchapter, we received the news that the Episcopal Conference of Madagascar has asked our sisters to publish the Bible in Malagasy—truly good news! Our sisters are working intensively on this project, which, as you can imagine, will require a major financial investment that the Delegation cannot sustain by itself. Because of this, I appeal to your generosity, asking that the fruit of the renunciations you practice this Lent be directed to helping our Institute concretize this splendid gift to the Church of Madagascar. Please send your offerings to the Bursar General, who will see to it that they are used for this purpose. Thank you as of now for your help.

May the Apostle Paul and our saints accompany us on our Lenten journey so that we can live to the full our meeting with the crucified and risen Christ.

Please keep in your prayers the Fraternal Visits and other trips we will soon be making to India and Africa.

United to all of you in joy, hope and deep affection,


Sr. M. Antonietta Bruscato
Superior General