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Colombia: Pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Chiquinquirá, Patroness of Colombia

(04/06/2009)



The Pauline Family of Colombia opened the month of May with a pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Chiquinquirá, Patroness of the country.

Animated by great faith and a vibrant desire to live a profound Marian and Pauline experience, the 55 participants gathered early in the morning on 1 May to initiate their pilgrimage, which was animated by the FSP formandees.

In the course of their journey, the group paused in Ubate's Minor Basilica of Christ the King to listen to a conference on the theme, *St. Paul the Communicator*, guided by Fr. Danilo Medina, ssp. Afterward, the pilgrimage continued on to the Marian Sanctuary, where a solemn Mass was celebrated.

Italy: Rome - Returning to the Fonts of the Pauline Charism (02/06/2009)



The annual course of Formation to the Charism of the Pauline Family concluded on 28 May in Rome with a Eucharistic Celebration presided over by Fr. Silvio Sassi, Superior General of the Society of St. Paul.

The course offered its 28 participants the opportunity to "return to the fonts" of our charismatic identity and acquire a global vision of what it means to be the "Pauline Family," in the unity and complementarity of our various gifts.

Nine Daughters of St. Paul from 4 continents and 8 different nations (USA, Brazil, Madagascar, Congo, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Spain and Korea) participated in this year's academic program. "This course gave us an integral vision of the Pauline charism," a spokesperson for the group said.

"We now feel a keener responsibility to live Jesus Master Way, Truth and Life so as to communicate him to the world." She also expressed the sisters' gratitude to the General Governments of the Pauline Family and in particular to FSP Superior General, Sr. M. Antonietta Bruscato and her council, for the chance to participate in this important event, "in which each of us found the key for continuing to reflect more deeply on the Pauline charism in our own life."

Italy: Albano Laziale Celebrates World Communications Day (01-06-2009)



"Celebrating Together" was the title of the event held in the theater of the Cathedral of Albano Laziale on Sunday, 24 May in honor of World Communications Day.

One of the highlights of the program was the 2009 National Fr. Alberione Award Ceremony for the winners of the contest in which elementary, intermediate and high schools in Albano and its outlying areas (Ariccia, Anzio, Pomezia, Genzano...) recently participated.

The contest, organized by the Daughters of St. Paul and sponsored by the Albano municipality, gave students the chance to reflect more deeply on communications, underscoring the importance of educating young people to use of the media.

The candidates for this year's award were invited to express their thoughts and opinions about Pope Benedict XVI's Message for World Communications Day: *New Technologies, New Relationships. Promoting a Culture of Respect, Dialogue and Friendship*.

Poland -Celebrating World Day of Prayer for Vocations Intensively (31/05/2009)



Several dozen young people from various parishes of the Lowicz Diocese and the seminarians of its Major Seminary gathered in Our Lady of Consolation Church to celebrate World Day of Prayer for Vocations. One important moment on the program was the testimony of Karina Sierzega, an FSP novice, who centered her talk on words, "I know the one in whom I have put my trust" (2 Tm. 1:12).

This was followed by the testimony of an elderly priest, Fr. Giorgio, which enabled the participants to compare the input of someone with many years of experience in the religious life with that of someone just starting out in it.

During the prayer liturgy, Karina and Fr. Giorgio each placed a candle before a picture of the Blessed Mother and entrusted to her all vocations, especially those who feel called to the religious life.

The encounter concluded with a few words by Bishop Andrea Dziuba, who thanked everyone for their participation in this diocesan event and invited everyone to take part in next year's celebration, which will be held in Skierniewice, the "birthplace" of the Apostoline Sisters in Poland.

Pakistan: Lahore - More Damage to Our FSP Book Center (29/05/2009)



Once again a dismayed world heard about yet another terrorist attack in Lahore, which caused many deaths and injuries, as well as extensive damage to public and private property.

For the second time, our FSP book center in this city was damaged. When the bomb went off, our sisters and some of their employees were in the center. Everyone was badly frightened, but no one was injured.

Damage to the building and its contents was slightly less than that caused by the previous attack (11 March 2008) and our sisters have already courageously rolled up their sleeves and started to restore order. Meanwhile, the wounded are receiving medical help and the dead have been taken away.

Our sisters are deeply grateful to the Lord for his protection. They palpably feel that "*his hand is upon them.*" This certitude sustains them and has prompted them to renew their commitment to glorifying his name. They are also praying for the entire world-so lacerated by conflicts and wars-asking the Lord to send his Spirit to envelop everyone in an aura of fraternity and peace.

Brazil: Focus on the Family (28/05/2009)



"*The Family: Disciple and Missionary at the Service of Life*"-this was the theme of the National Family Pilgrimage held on 24 May in Aparecida, Brazil. The event was organized by the Episcopal Commission for Pastoral Work with Families (one of whose members is Sr. Ivonete Kurten, fsp) in collaboration with the Brazilian Bishops Conference. About 150,000 people participated in the pilgrimage.

The Daughters of St. Paul, one of the sponsors of the initiative, also contributed to it by publishing a series of books on the family that were then disseminated by a team of collaborators. According to His Excellency Orlando Brandes, Archbishop of Londrina and president of the Episcopal Commission for Families, the pilgrimage was an important occasion for reflecting on the family. As he said: "We want Brazilians to rediscover the key role the family plays in coping with the serious crisis we are living today."

Italy: Verona - Contest To Help Students Get To Know St. Paul (27/05/2009)



To celebrate the 2000th anniversary of the birth of the Apostle Paul, the FSPs of Verona in collaboration with the Verona Diocesan School Office recently held a contest that was warmly welcomed by students at all grade levels. The initiative, entitled, *Paul: From the Sword to the Word*, was presented to teachers as an opportunity to encourage their pupils to reflect and work together in groups in an interdisciplinary way.

Aimed at helping young people get to know the life, message and activities of St. Paul, the innovative contest was held from Dec. 2008-March 2009. More than 95 classes, with a total of more than 1800 students and their teachers, enthusiastically participated in the initiative, submitting numerous projects in the form of graphic designs, comic strips, picture galleries, videos, newspaper articles, poems, etc.... According to the rules of the contest, each project had to be accompanied by a written or multimedia explanation of it and the results were very interesting.

After intensive scrutiny on the part of a panel of judges, 18 primary, intermediate and secondary schools were awarded prizes for their projects. The judges based their decisions on the following criteria: how well the project corresponded to the theme of the contest, how clearly the project conveyed its message, and the technical-aesthetic value of the accompanying explanation.

Prizes were awarded to the winners of the contest during a ceremony held on 22 May at the bishop's residence. Present for the event were His Excellency Bishop Giuseppe Zenti, representatives of the various groups that had promoted the contest, and representatives from the civil and religious spheres.

All the students of the winning classes received a memento of the occasion from the FSP and SSP Publishing Houses.

Macau: 1960-2009: 40 Years at the Service of the Christians of South China (26/05/2009)



On 16 March 2009, the FSPs of Macau and Hong Kong joyously celebrated the 40th anniversary of the foundation of the Daughters of St. Paul in Macau. It was a day of thanksgiving for the innumerable graces they have received from the Lord in their four decades of service in South China. All the members of the Pauline Family from Macau and Hong Kong, as well as their collaborators and friends, were present for the celebration.

The group participated in a Eucharistic Liturgy at St. Francis Xavier Church, Coloane, celebrated by its pastor, Fr. Ramon Manalo. The simple but beautiful Liturgical Celebration enabled them to experience once again the unity and strength of the Pauline Family.

It was also a day to remember the pioneer members of the foundation, especially Sr. Serena Kanezaki, who is still in the Macau community, and Sr. Amalia Yamada, whom the sisters thanked for her selfless service over the past 16 years.

Italy: Rome - Booklets for the Year for Priests (25/05/2009)



Besides giving new impetus to the ongoing formation of priests, the celebration of a Jubilee Year for Priests (June 2009-June 2010) will also be an opportunity to involve the whole ecclesial community in prayer, solidarity and fraternal sharing with the clergy and with those who feel called to the priesthood.

With this in mind, our FSP International Secretariat for the Apostolate (SIA) has prepared two booklets: "*I have called you my friends*," composed of excerpts from a Letter of John Paul II to priests, whom he calls "friends of Jesus and visible ministers of his love, forgiveness and mercy"; and *Prayers for Priests*, a collection of prayers for priests, formators, deacons, missionaries and bishops drawn from various texts of

the Church and the writings of recent Popes (Pius X, Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI).

The booklet also contains a prayer composed by St. Therese of the Child Jesus and another by Blessed James Alberione.

The two full-color, 16-page booklets (format 15 cm. x 12.5 cm.) will be translated into various languages.

Italy: Rome - Communicators of a Message of Love (24/05/2009)



This is the title of a booklet written by Sr. M. Agnes Quaglioni that is being sent to our FSP communities throughout the world to commemorate World Communications Day. The booklet contains a series of articles on communications, some of which are new, while others, already published in the Institute's Information Bulletin, have now been updated and expanded.

The content of the booklet is divided into three parts: the world of communications, *how* we communicate and *what* we communicate, and concludes with a collection of prayers for communicators.

As the Superior General says in her Introduction, "This little volume is a reminder to us to continually reflect on the defining feature of the Pauline mission.... These stimulating and pro-action articles were written with apostolic passion and the desire to help us courageously and creatively seek new ways to carry out our apostolate so as to effectively reveal the face of Christ through the various forms of communication."

Sr. Antonietta also says she hopes that in reading these pages we will rediscover the beauty of the Pauline vocation and live it with joy so that young women today will be drawn to experience for themselves how wonderful it is to be "communicators of a message of love."

Japan -Tokyo - Formation Initiative on Communications (22/05/2009)



Our young professed sisters of Japan recently concluded a year-long course of formation to communications. The Province organized the initiative to help its younger members *live with greater awareness their call to be communicators of the Gospel* by striving to read current events in the light of the prophetic horizons of our Founder, Blessed James Alberione, and thus become apostles of the new era.

The course followed a participative methodology made up of study, research, sharing and communication. During the first encounter, each sister chose a theme that would enable her to get to know contemporary society through the media and once a month the participants met to share the fruits of their deeper study and reflection.

During these encounters, Sr. M. Cristina Hasegawa provided the group with content on communication as presented in the documents of the Church, and also input about the newspaper medium. In addition, the course participants learned how to interpret several films and also had the chance to visit an ultra-modern business-In April 2009, our young sisters presented their dissertations to the FSP community of Tokyo, whose members listened to their input with great interest and enthusiasm.

Italy: Evangelizing Today's Information Highways (Aldo Maria Valli) (21/05/2009)



From now on, all those involved in the field of education-particularly education to use of the mass media-will have a precious ally in Pope Benedict XVI's message for World Communications Day, which deals with the subject of the Internet.

The message does not demonize information technologies but displays a great trust in them. Calling them "gifts of God" as did his predecessors Pius XII and John Paul II, the Pope offers encouragement to the many people who, when faced with the distressing panorama offered by the Web, might feel tempted to avoid the world of cyberspace.

The instruments of communication, he says, even the most innovative, are simply instruments in the hands of human beings: it is up to us to use them responsibly. He then offers clear advice as to how to do this. The Pope asks that the Web not be sullied by immoral or trivial content and urges everyone to act in such a way that the desire for "virtual friendships," so widespread in the universe of cyberspace, will not be pursued at the expense of concrete human relationships and time dedicated to the family.

He then extends to everyone the pressing invitation to take advantage of the Internet as an instrument that can be used to help correct social imbalances, not magnify them. The world of cyberspace should be expanded and shared, the Pope says. It would be seriously detrimental to humanity if technological progress were used to widen already-existing divisions in society, and if it were employed as an instrument of power and manipulation on the part a few.

Benedict XVI points out calmly and clearly that Christians, even when faced with the new media, must always remained grounded in reality. We must avoid extremism. Today's information technologies should not be revered as if they were the sole hope of the citizens of the Third Millennium, but neither should they be seen as incarnations of evil. Both attitudes are non-constructive and therefore un-Christian.

Jesus taught his followers to insert the Gospel message in contemporary culture and we must do the same today, using every means at our disposal. The Pope concludes his message with a beautiful exhortation to today's young Christians, who belong to the "digital generation."

He urges them to use their abilities-including their facility with modern technologies-to do good, saying that contemporary information highways are like city streets and public squares: realities that need to be evangelized and redeemed.

Colombia: Online Diploma in Human Rights and Values (20/05/2009)



An alliance between the FSPs of SAL (our Institute's Latin-American Secretariat for the Apostolate) and the Catolica del Norte (Medellin-Colombia) University Foundation has made it possible for the two groups to offer the public a diploma in *Human Rights and Values from the Perspective of Biblical Spirituality*.

Sr. Luz Marina Plata, fsp, is in charge of the programming and implementation of this common project, which will consist of 120 class hours, divided into 3 stages.

The course is being offered to parish animators, catechists, pastoral workers, laity, religious, seminarians and professionals so as to strengthen their formation and foster the growth of Bible study groups, schools for pastoral action, seminars on ongoing formation, etc. It also hopes to respond to the major challenges facing contemporary

Latin American society, which wants to take decisive steps toward building a culture of peace.

For more information about this course and how to enroll in it, please visit www.ucn.edu.co

Italy: Pope Benedict XVI in the Holy Land (19/05/2009)



Pope Benedict XVI concluded his pilgrimage to the Holy Land on 15 May. The trip began in Jordan, where the Holy Father visited the ancient Basilica of the Memorial of Moses at Mount Nebo. Besides his visit to important Christian sites, the Pope also visited the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial, the Mount of the Temple, the Western Wall and a Palestinian refugee camp.

Many people, including Fr. Federico Lombardi, called the Pope's pilgrimage "the most desired but also the most demanding" of his pontificate. The unstable political situation, the problems of the Christian Churches in that part of the world,

and dialogue between Muslims and Jews were the main themes of the Pope's pastoral visit. On more than one occasion he underscored the urgent need to establish an enduring peace between Jews and Palestinians.

"No more blood shedding! No more fighting! No more terrorism! No more war!" With this heartfelt plea at Ben Gurion Airport, the Pope bid farewell to the Holy Land.

Philippines: Pasay City - National Congress for FSP Collaborators (18/05/2009)



Evangelizing Together To Spread the Word of God: this was the theme of the National Congress for Pauline Lay Collaborators held in Pasay City from 1-4 May 2009. About a hundred collaborators of various types (employees, professionals, young people, etc.) participated in the encounter, together with their FSP coordinators. Aware of the need to give new impetus to evangelization, the group reflected on the situation of society today and on how necessary it is that all the Pauline collaborators work in synergy with one another.

Bishop Rolando Tirona reminded everyone that all the faithful have the duty to help the Church carry out its mission, while Bishop Teodoro Bacani underscored the need to return to our Source, the Word of God, so as to bring about a truly dynamic change in society. Fr. Mario Sobreuanite, ssp, then challenged the participants to use the powerful instruments of communication to help the Word "race ahead." The Congress generated a high level of enthusiasm that our sisters hope will now lead to a true "explosion" of apostolic activity!

Section Communication

The New Home in Heaven

... where Christ ascended and awaits us, too



One Sunday toward the end of May, when summer was almost at the door and all its colors already bursting forth, a young couple with their three children were walking with a rhythmic step along a mountain footpath. They had participated in the Eucharist and listened to the story of the Ascension of the Lord. During their conversation, almost entirely monosyllable so as not to slow the pace, the youngest child ask his mother: "If we continue to climb this mountain will we too reach Jesus in Heaven?" The mother smiled at her child and answered: "right now it's still not time, but one day yes, if we merit it."

The ascent continued in silence; at a certain point on a little out-cropping, where in the distance they could see the highest summits of the Dolomites, the three Peaks of Lavarredo, the boy turned again to his mother and asked: "If we climb those three mountains, will we arrive in heaven? And where would we live in heaven?" His mother responded: "If we are good, if we love well and help out the most poor, when we reach heaven we will have a new, beautiful home, together with many friends."

The family continued its trip and arrived unexpectedly in front of a small church with a bell tower. They entered and immediately each felt a sense of rest and peace. They remained in silence, tasting the religious atmosphere that reigned in the House of God. Here, too, the child had a question for his mother: "Mamma, is this the new house in heaven?" "No, my child, but in some ways it is similar. Jesus is also here, just as he was on the Mount of Olives when he ascended into heaven. He is in the tabernacle and in our midst when we love each other and remember to help those who are poorer than we are..."

I do not know how this beautiful dialogue between the mother and her child ended, but it was an extraordinary catechesis on the mystery of the Ascension of the Lord that can generate hope even in children and must have certainly left its mark.

The Ascension of the Lord is a mystery of hope

The mystery of the Ascension of Christ, which the Church celebrates close to Pentecost, stirs up in us too a *desire for Heaven*, as it did for the Apostles who remained looking up at the sky in awe. All their hope was concentrated in that extraordinary final moment of Jesus' earthly existence when he ascended from the mountain to the right hand of the Father and where the glory of the Risen Christ reached its fullness: "Heaven." And the era of the Church began.

This was not abandonment on the part of Jesus; we need not remain inert, immobile and sad as we seek the gaze of God "among the clouds." Christ promised to remain in our midst.

The Ascension completes the work of redemption carried out in the mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus. It points us toward the final goal of every human person and of creation itself: the meeting with Christ in his kingdom of true joy and unending communion. This is the hope of the Church and the hope of each of us as we journey toward the future city, toward our "new home in Heaven."

It is certainly superfluous to state that we all need hope. Khalil Gibran said, in reference to hope: "The three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity are like three sisters who walk hand in hand. Faith and charity seem larger and are on the edges; hope appears as the smaller one, who needs to be supported, and thus is in the center. But if we look at this carefully, we cannot really tell as they hold hands if it might not be the smaller one who is actually supporting the larger ones."

Hope gives meaning to life for the big and the small. But we all know how difficult it is to preserve hope, especially in the face of grave difficulties, when everything seems to be collapsing. During the life of Jesus and his Apostles, along with others who believed in him, there came a time when the hope that sustained the mission for which they were chosen and sent seemed about to collapse: the moment of separation. The apostles experienced this bewilderment and with it the sensation of the ending of a hope which was still unclear, after Jesus' death on the cross. When he was placed in the sepulcher, it seemed like the end of all their false hopes. But it would be Jesus himself who would cancel every doubt with his resurrection and thus re-ignite hope to continue on. He would assure them of his presence: *"I will be with you all days, even to the end of the world"* (Mt 28:20). And the apostles no longer feared; they awaited the Holy Spirit to begin their mission, guided by faith and charity held by the hand of hope.

The power of Christian hope lies in the certainty that Jesus is with us, accompanies our footsteps, is our strength and our future, the secure goal toward which we are journeying. Pope Paul VI, in a homily given on the Ascension, said that Christian hope is the great comfort of the world. The beatitudes of the Gospel are for the poor in spirit; those who weep, the humble, the unhappy. Christian hope is the great certainty of those who strive for just ideals – who may not win, but who do not fight in vain. It is the guarantee of a blessed tomorrow for those whose today was not complete. The hymn of hope must echo toward Christ who disappears from the earthly scene with the Ascension into Heaven, and must become, as it is in the liturgy, the hymn of those left behind on earth to follow his example and await his return.

The apostle Paul, in the passage from the letter to the Ephesians which the liturgy proposes for the feast of the Ascension of the Lord, recommends to us: "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph 4:1-6).

The hope of our Christian vocation helps us overcome present trials more easily, but it also pledges us to accept the gift of faith and its witness, so as to bring about a possible paradise on this earth for those who find its source in the heart of God who is charity and love, understanding and mercy toward all. It commits us to unite the three theological virtues in the scene of this world, because this is the place where the future will be written with God.

The Ascension of the Lord is an invitation to look toward the door of Heaven and never move our gaze as we await our meeting with Him. This means making life beautiful, as we do when we raise our eyes toward the mountains illumined by the light of God.

Sr. M. Agnes Quaglino



The Three Peaks of Lavaredo in the eastern Alps

Best wishes from the PaolineOnline editorial team

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