



Rome, November 26, 2013
Feast of Blessed James Alberione

To all the Sisters

Dearest Sisters,

I am writing to you, also on behalf of the sisters of the new general government, to send my most affectionate greetings for the feast of our Founder, and for the beginning of our Advent journey that will start on December 1. Don Alberione's anniversary of entrance into heaven assumes a particular significance during this time of the Chapter animation and the preparation for our centenary; it speaks to us of grace and light, of God's paternal and provident guidance, and of unshakeable faith.

When Don Alberione at seventy years of age recalled his own history of salvation, he looked at his vocational experience from the perspective of *light*. It was both a dazzling light that pierces the darkness (AD 15), as well as a faint light that guided a "half-blind man, who as he moves along, is enlightened from time to time, so that he can proceed further" (AD 202). This light became clearer in his contact with reality, his attention to culture, and in the development of events considered before the Lord in a spirit of discernment. He discovered in his own experience, the paternal hand that always guided him firmly and sweetly: "I felt the hand of God—a paternal and wise hand, notwithstanding my innumerable insufficiencies.... Oh, if only we knew how to reflect on the years past and see how God has led us, with his hand extended over us... The houses sprang up and grew almost spontaneously" (UPS I15.17).

The Founder recognized his own unworthiness, but he had a clear awareness of being the Spirit's instrument, the guardian of a gift, invested with the task of transmitting it. During the great *Gathering* in Ariccia (1960), he confided, "Before God and man, I feel the gravity of the mission entrusted to me by the Lord who, had he found a person more unworthy and unfit, would have preferred him. Nevertheless, for me and for everyone, this is the guarantee that the Lord has willed and has done everything himself; just like the artist who picks up a paintbrush worth a few coins and is unaware of the work to be accomplished, were it even a beautiful picture of the Divine Master Jesus Christ." (UPS I, 375).

Whatever our age or apostolic service, whether in health or in illness, *we too are keepers of a gift, invested with the task of transmitting and communicating it*. We are like *paintbrushes* in the hands of the Lord to fulfill the sacred office of preaching the Gospel, which, in the Founder's mind, is expressed in terms of light; this preaching is achieved by doing "the most sublime charity," that is, the *charity of truth*.

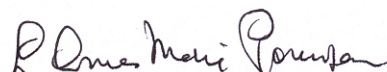
Advent is a favorable time to feel that we are resting in the palm of God's hand, consoled by him and sent to console others. It is a time to perceive that the spirit of wisdom and intelligence, counsel and strength settles over us, who are fragile shoots; it is a time to accept the invitation of letting the word of faith live in us, even if at times it seems missing from our heart: "Courage, fear not. Trust in the Lord always, because the Lord is an eternal rock" (from the Prophet Isaiah).

During this Advent, we want to take up the repeated invitations of Pope Francis to *let ourselves be surprised by God, and allow him to enter into our lives*, in the certainty that he is always working and acting in us; he is our strength.

We also desire to live this Advent in *solidarity* with those persons who are most poor and in need. This year, our sharing could help the numerous families of our Filipino sisters who have lost their homes and all their goods during the strong earthquake in the island of Bohol, last October, and in the recent terrible typhoon.

May the Lord grant us the gift of being inundated with that "cascade" of consolation and maternal tenderness imparted to us during this liturgical time, in order to bring to everyone the love that warms hearts and awakens hope. "Communicate fire, because I have sent you to bring fire!"—these words written by Alberione to Giaccardo many years ago in 1933, are still a program of life for us today.

With great affection for all of you.


Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan
Superior general