

Information n. 1

Rome, 18 January 2010

Dearest Sisters,

We have reached the halfway point of our Continental Meeting, aimed at redesigning our presences in Europe and Canada/Quebec. Our activities are posted each day on our www.paoline.org website, but we would like to summarize those news flashes for you in this information bulletin and thus provide you with a thumbnail sketch of our journey up to today.

Sr. M. Antonietta opened the meeting by inviting us to have hope and to cultivate the art of listening to one another so as to move in the right direction—one that will enable the re-designing process to foster growth and generate new life.

During the first stage of our work we listened to our sisters present a general picture of the countries in which we live and work so as to build a common platform of knowledge concerning the complex situation of the “Old World” and Quebec. Participating in this encounter are FSPs from 12 different countries who basically face the same challenges and problems. We did our best to listen to the Spirit so as to better grasp God’s plan for our Congregation and discern new paths for the future. We also sought to pinpoint the convergences common to our Pauline life and thus come to a clearer grasp of how we can better respond to the needs of people today through our mission. Everyone concurred that the great challenges facing Europe and Quebec right now are cultural change, multi-culturality and multi-religiosity, as well as the challenge presented by the digital world—one that is very invasive but at the same time very fascinating, especially to young people. What technological languages, instruments and forms should we use for evangelization? We should not be afraid to let new situations question us profoundly because it is precisely these that oblige us to purify the “already known” so as to renew our faith and Pauline life.

We then reflected on our spirituality, formation, pastoral work for vocations, apostolate, communications and economy/administration, and shared ideas concerning these key areas of our life. We agreed that the Pauline **spirituality** is the unifying power of our life because it helps us to better understand and incarnate our charism. We also concurred that **pastoral work for vocations** is one of the clearest signs of love for the Congregation and that **formation** is an important element for the renewal of all Institutes. We then asked ourselves what new ways we can use to **share our Pauline charism and mission with the laity**. The conference on the **apostolate** underscored that our apostolic call must rekindle in us the “flame” of mission. We reaffirmed that **communications** is the “golden thread” running through the whole Pauline life and that this, together with the Word of God, redesigns our journey. We concluded with a reflection on our **economy/administration**, which, in the light of the current worldwide economic crisis, urges us to cultivate greater communion, solidarity and industriousness.

On Saturday we made a pilgrimage to the Queen of Apostles Sanctuary, where we prayed intensely at the tombs of our Founders. We presented them with all our communities, begged them to send us vocations, and asked for light in drawing up our Continental Project.

On Sunday, 17 January, guest speakers Fr. Bartolomeo Sorge, sj, and Dr. David Sassoli, a member of the European Parliament, offered us a panorama of the situations and problems facing European society and the Church on this continent.

Fr. Sorge said that by now the Church is a “minority group” in Europe and that if she is to be “leaven” in modern society, then she must dedicate herself always more intensively to the service of humanity, renouncing her old supports and privileges and counting only on the power of the Word of God so as to steadfastly live her choice of him. Rooted in friendship with Christ, the Church leads people to God through her faith and witness. Today, it is more than ever necessary that she exercise her prophetic role and that she courageously denounce evil and error under the guidance of the Spirit. Fr. Sorge said it is the Christian laity who can play a key role in preventing the Church from turning inward and help her to engage in intercultural dialogue, offering the world a genuine code of ethics. The FSPs of Europe must allow the Pauline charism to point them toward the frontiers of tomorrow and integrate themselves into today’s new culture, languages and psychological attitudes, counting on the presence of the Lord and his promises.

Dr. David Sassoli gave us an overview of Europe’s socio-political situation, which is characterized by a notable economic recession that is disseminating fear, generating insecurity and causing people to react negatively by closing in on themselves. Europe’s declining birth rate (projected to drop from 375,000 in 2010 to 265,000 by 2050), the decrease in the continent’s work force, and the growth of the senior citizen age group are all trends that are making a major impact on families, the life of society and the economy. People have little faith in today’s political systems and it has become very difficult to control the processes that govern society. Even though Europe’s standard of living is higher today, strong socio-economic inequalities persist. The communications sector is expanding rapidly, as can be seen by the fact that more than a billion people use the Internet. Unfortunately, Dr. Sassoli concluded, a serious obstacle to Europe’s journey toward unity is the fact that, above and beyond the failure of its countries to resolve their economic disparities, Europeans have not made the effort to forge a common identity or a common code of ethics.

Sisters, we want to thank you very sincerely for your prayers for us—we truly count on them as we continue our work. In the coming days we will be striving to make the best use possible of all the input we have received and all our exchanges of ideas so as to determine what road to pursue in redesigning our presences in Europe and Canada/Quebec.

Warmest best wishes from all of us.

Sr. Vanda Salvador

Sr. M. Letizia Panzetti