



CONCLUSION OF THE FORMATION ENCOUNTER

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We have reached the end of our Encounter and we are grateful above all to the Lord for everything he allowed us to live in these days of grace. He accompanied us with his benevolence, arranging every detail: from the speakers who cast great light on our journey, to the rich sharing sessions, to the joy of being together, experiencing the beauty of our universality. These were important days first of all for us...because they offered us the possibility of a regenerating break at all levels.

We experienced how beautiful it is to get together, share the fundamental values of the Pauline life, contemplate the riches received, and marvel at the splendid gift of our vocation.

In these days, we felt very close to the young women whom the Lord has given us in every part of the world. They are a precious “good” he has entrusted to us so that we can offer them the best conditions for reaching the goal of our vocation: holiness.

Together, we rediscovered our identity and the enthusiasm of being daughters of the Apostle Paul, called to experience the ardent passion of being *in Christ* and to cry out to everyone the joy of this belonging.

We came to understand that the first and absolute agent of formation is the Holy Spirit; we are his assistants.... It is the Spirit who guides our transformation, the transformation of our communities and of the young women we are called to accompany. These days were above all an invitation to entrust ourselves to the action of the Holy Spirit, the true protagonist of our life, mission and formation.

My thanks to everyone...

I want to thank all of you for your sense of responsibility and for the quality of your involvement [in this Encounter].

My thanks to the sisters who wisely and discreetly guided our work and who did not neglect the slightest desire, expectation, hope....

My thanks to the tutors and group secretaries, who interpreted and expressed the wealth that was shared.

Special thanks to our speakers for their competent and passionate input.

My thanks to the sisters who produced the news flashes and those who posted it on our website and social networks, and to those who took pictures of the event.

My thanks to the sisters who guided our liturgies.

My thanks to Sr. Lucia and the team that helped her prepare our daily meals and snacks with such care and creativity.

My thanks to Sr. Ancy and the sisters of the Generalate community for their welcome, prayers and daily offerings—all of which were a precious support to our work.

“Toward the joy of love”

Making our own the objective of the upcoming Synod of Bishops (cf. IL 1), we thank the Lord for the beautiful task of accompanying the young women entrusted to us toward the joy of love, reawakening the prophetic dimension of the consecrated life (cf. IL 103).

The results of the survey of young religious made in preparation for the Synod reveal that young people have a profound yearning for joy and love, for an authentically fraternal life enriched by the bonds of shared affection. They yearn for a Church that is a prophecy of fraternity. They dream of a life centered on prayer and intimacy with God; a life of conscious Gospel radicality that requires gradual accompaniment toward the generous gift of self: a life, therefore, of gratuitousness (cf. IL 72).

Your very rich and convergent reflections and proposals also followed this line. Let me summarize here some of the power ideas you reaffirmed in these days and that have been incorporated into the lines of formative action that you drew up:

- *unification of life in Christ the Master* through a slow process of transformation that takes place in daily life when we allow ourselves to be pierced by the “sword” of the Word and live in the gratuitous love of the Eucharist;
- *the preparation of formators* who are able to listen to our young sisters and accompany them in a personalized way; who are able to work in teams, to discern, to welcome with respect and competence young women born in the digital era;
- a style of life that is simple, joyous, missionary, open to cultures and to intergenerational dialogue in the *formative community*;
- *an integration of formators and superiors* that will result in the growth of a “vocational culture” that can help our young professed sisters and communities feel co-responsible for the Pauline charism.

I want to once more underscore that the formative process of our young women, but also our own formative process, requires choices that can help us rediscover a “taste” for thinking and reflecting, the privilege of carving out time to take care of our interior life. Therefore, “silence, interiority and depth” in order to live discernment, become capable of listening, and improve the quality of our communication.

“The desert will bloom...”

For us, who often experience the aridity of the service of formation, the certainty expressed by the prophet Isaiah is very consoling: “The desert will bloom...” (Is. 35:1). God continues to accomplish the story of salvation even today. His covenant is irrevocable. It requires on our part unlimited trust in his presence and action: “Do not be afraid. I am with you...”

These words, addressed to the prophets and apostles of all times, have touched our lives and will without a doubt touch the hearts of young women.... We should not be afraid of the “impossible,” of the poverty we often experience. Miracles happen only in “impossible” situations.

Let us recall what happened at the Red Sea: the waters parted only when the Israelites began to wade into the sea. The people did not wait for the waters to divide...they continued their journey and saw the waters part before them. This is the logic of God—the logic that was lived by Fr. Alberione and Maestra Thecla. They moved ahead, trusting God even when everything was dark.

Let us call to mind what the Lord did at our beginnings: the small Pauline Family, which was born without a house, without a name, without anyone noticing it, experienced the tragedy of death in 1918 when the Lord called to himself two of its most beautiful flowers: Maggiorino and Clelia Calliano. We should often reflect on the significance of these two figures, who this year are celebrating the centenary of their birth to heaven. We should seek to grasp from their lives the call to holiness that we are invited to propose to our young women.

Maggiorino (1904-1918): “*I want to belong entirely to God*”

Fr. Alberione suggested to Maggiorino a simple but effective rule of life: “To make a little progress every day.” Maggiorino’s life was truly one of continual progress in availability, openness, enthusiasm and generosity. On 25 January 1918, he wrote: “Today too I want to convert myself. I want to belong entirely to God.”

And at the end of a retreat, he wrote: “With the help of God and the protection of St. Paul, I intend and resolve to consecrate my whole life to the apostolate of the press.”

Clelia Calliano (1892-1918): “*I offer my life for the Good Press*”

In September 1915, Clelia Calliano, from Corneliano d’Alba, arrived at what was called “The Feminine Workshop.” In 1918, she contracted the Spanish Flu and died just 10 days later, on 22 October, while the small group of “daughters” were preparing to leave for Susa. Clelia had been carrying out the service of cook in the Alba community, but she was the only member of the group who knew how to set type.

Here is how M. Thecla described her death:

“...Clelia fell ill and after ten days she flew to heaven, taking with her a burning desire to come with us to Susa to work for the Good Press. The Lord willed to take Clelia to himself—she to whom we had entrusted many tasks since she was both healthy and good. Instead, God gave us a protectress who did even more for us from heaven than when she was alive. We all felt this...” (*Our Beginnings*, p. 16).

And Fr. Timothy Giaccardo testified:

“Her last words to the Theologian were: ‘If the Lord lets me live, I want to consecrate all my energies to the Good Press. Even if I were only allowed to sweep the room where the others work, that, I think, is already a great deal. If I die, I offer my life for the God Press. In heaven, I will always pray for the Good Press....’ The seed bore fruit: her intercession proved effective” (Blessed Timothy Giaccardo, *Our Beginnings*, p. 34).

The Hour of Faith

What is sure is that at this hour of history we need to focus wholly on faith, on the faith lived by the first generations of Christians and Paulines.

M. Thecla wrote in her spiritual notebooks:

“Let us believe that by ourselves we can do nothing. When we believe that we are nothing, we have everything.”

“We have to believe that the Lord will give us all the graces we need. He will give us the necessary wisdom, the graces for our vocation, ability in the apostolate.”

“Because we are nothing, we need humility for our responsibilities and for the graces the Lord wants to give us.”

“In spite of every difficulty, we must believe that it is the Lord who is doing things.”

Reiterating the thought of A. Schmemmann, a famous Orthodox theologian, Italian theologian Gianmarco Busca wrote:

“The early Christians were not bearers of any program, of any theory, but wherever they went, the seed of the Kingdom sprouted and faith began to burn...because their whole being was a living torch of praise for the risen Christ. He and only he was the sole happiness of their life, and the goal of the Church was to communicate to the world and to history joy in the risen Christ, in whom all things have their beginning and end.”

May the Spirit make us “living torches” that spread the light, fire and joy of the risen Christ.