

Toward Full Maturity in Christ

An International Formation Encounter is currently underway in our St. Paul House, Rome, Italy. More than 40 sisters from our circumscriptions throughout the world are participating in this 2-week event (12-24 July).

Together, we are living very busy days, rich in enlightenment, sharing, discernment and prayer, feeling alongside us our young women, who are the most precious wealth of the Congregation.

The Encounter is aimed in particular at the sisters in charge of the formation of the Institute's Juniors and young perpetual professed sisters. In fact, we are questioning ourselves about the problems some of our young sisters experience precisely during the Juniorate and the period immediately after final vows. What are the causes of these problems?

At times, we note that it is because of an insufficient or weak vocational discernment that does not offer our young sisters valid reasons for continuing in the Pauline life or for overcoming eventual difficulties in it. We also note that our young professed sisters might be lacking a wise accompaniment that can foster their vocational maturation and growth in faith.

It is not easy, in our era, to make a definitive choice: we are victims of a culture of the provisional—a "liquid" culture that lacks solid roots.... In this context, how can we guarantee the *quality, fidelity and fruitfulness* of the FSPs of today and tomorrow?

The theme of the Encounter, *Toward Full Maturity in Christ* (cf. Eph. 4:13), is in continuity with the journey initiated in our International Formation Meetings of 2010 and 2012, and also with the Seminar on Apostolic Mysticism and our 2016 Interchapter Meeting.

For all of us, the goal is the very exciting one of living the *new life* we received in Baptism so as to attain full maturity in Christ (cf. Eph. 4:12).

This is the purpose of formation: to manifest the Christ who lives in us: "The process of sanctification is a process of Christification" (CVV 272). Thus it is not an exterior formation but one that reaches the heart, setting it on fire for the Lord, so that one "hands herself over" to him, allows herself to be "seized" by him, and entrusts herself to him. It is a formation that leads us to learn from the events of daily life, from what we proclaim and celebrate every day. As Pope Francis reminds us: "Vocational crises do not exist where there are consecrated persons capable of transmitting through the witness of their lives the beauty of religious consecration."

In this sense, we are all formators: we are all called to witness to the fact that our greatest wealth is the person of Christ, a name of "divine splendor," as St. Ignatius of Antioch said.

The words of Pope Francis urge us on:

"Let no one rob you of the joy of following Jesus Christ and of the courage to propose him to others as way, truth and life. Let us conquer our fears! It is time for young people to dream and for the elderly to prophesy. Let us get up and get to work! (cf. Ex. 10:4) The young await us. It's time to move!" (Pope Francis, 1 December 2017)

We hope that this event will make the fire that the Spirit ignited in us on the day of our Baptism and of our profession explode within us and help us rediscover our first love, the inspiring spark that gave rise to our discipleship (cf. *Starting Afresh from Christ*, 22). May it reinforce our faith in the Promise so that we can truly welcome the invitation to *get to our feet* and resume our journey every day in fidelity and joy.

We are sure that we can count on the prayers of all the sisters of the Congregation, in particular those experiencing great suffering, whose lives are for all of us a living sacrifice offered to the Father every day like a solemn liturgy for the salvation of humanity.

Affectionately,

Sr. Anna Maria Parenzan