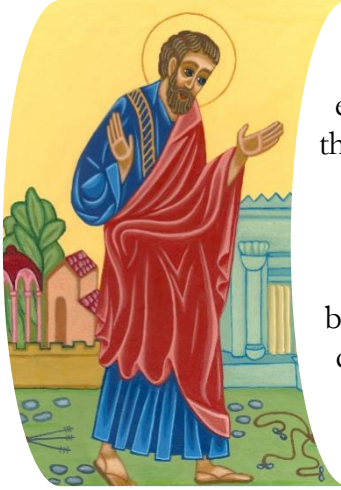


Feast of St. Paul, Apostle

Rome, 30 June 2022



Dearest Sisters and young women in formation,

I wish to address to each of you, on this feast day, Paul's exhortation to the Philippians, because they are a true balm in these difficult times, full of human drama and suffering:

Rejoice in the Lord always. I say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near! (Phil. 4:4-45).

From the cell in Ephesus in which the Apostle was imprisoned because of the Gospel, he does not offer his followers sad or discouraging words, nor complaints, recriminations or accusations. Instead, his message to them is an invitation to joy that runs through the entire letter and that, in the verses quoted, becomes even more insistent. It is a joy not linked to an absence of

worries, to success or to good health, but rather to a certainty: "The Lord is near!"

It is this that makes us joyful, cordial, kind and generous. This is the most enduring joy; all other joys are weak, ephemeral, rootless. This is the "good news" we want to share with others through the witness of our personal and community life and all the expressions of our apostolate: *the Lord is near, comforting you in every tribulation* (cf. 2 Cor. 1:3-7), *gifting you with his presence, his courage, his light*.

Fr Alberione urged us to strive for this goal:

Joy on both the personal and family levels [...] Let the family of the Daughters of St. Paul be permeated with holy joy. In this way, you will pray better and will easily pass over many little things that, when viewed through clouded vision, appear to be mountains. Joy in the book center and on propaganda. [...] Joy in the apostolate, especially in your apostolate, through which you are in constant contact with the world (FSP 46-49, p. 502).

We are therefore called to the *diakonia* (service) of joy. It is a gift of the Lord that cannot be kept for oneself. Pope Francis, in a homily in the chapel of *Santa Marta*, said that joy, to be such, must never stop circulating: it is a "pilgrim virtue"—a gift that walks along the road of life, that walks in the company of Jesus.

Rejoice always! This is the wish that, on behalf of the sisters of the General Government, I extend in a special way to those who, in different parts of the world, have pronounced or will pronounce their generous *yes* through their first or perpetual professions, and to the sisters who are celebrating the Lord's faithfulness on their anniversaries of profession.

In union with Maestra Thecla, "I accompany you with my heart, thoughts and prayers."

h. Anna Caiazza
sr Anna Caiazza
Superior General