

Solemnity of St. Paul Apostle

Rome, 30 June 2023



Dearest Sisters and young women in formation,

As we celebrate today's Solemnity, I hear addressed to each of us the Apostle Paul's invitation to the Corinthians to strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts. To the members of that community, always on the lookout for new knowledge and experiences, he points out "the best way of all": *love* (cf. 1 Co. 12:31–13:1-13).

Love is the path to what is essential, to what really matters. It is not identified with beautiful words, nor with a faith great enough to work miracles, nor with heroic generosity. The absence of love, of *agape*, renders all action, even the most extraordinary, useless; it empties it of substance. If love is extinguished, then the other virtues gradually disappear as well. If love is missing, Paul says, "*I am nothing*".

For the Apostle, love is the answer to three major questions: how to resolve the tensions that tear a community apart; how to grow and become adults in the faith; and how to find, in passing things, what is enduring. Faith and hope, in fact, are part of the "temporary," while love belongs to what never ends. The experience that, beginning right now, best anticipates the future is love.

Fr Alberione often quoted the *Hymn to Love*. For a time, he had signs posted in our community and apostolic environments that listed the characteristics of love according to St. Paul. But, he insisted, "See to it that these words are written first of all in your hearts. As the years go by, make greater and greater progress in love. Love one another! Love one another! Love one another!" (FSP54, p. 52)

If not imbued with love, then what we do is not a credible witness to our faith in the Risen One and does not give visibility to our charism. It also means *doing good by loving one another in a sisterly spirit* in which the affective and apostolic dimensions of our life are inseparably entwined (cf. Const. 60). Indeed, communion is the fundamental condition for being effective apostles

Let us be guided, sisters, by the inspired words of the Apostle Paul, asking through his intercession for a love capable of "decentering itself" in order to place Christ Jesus, Love Incarnate, at the true center of our life.

On this feast day dear to all of us, I and the sisters of the General Government would like to extend our warmest best wishes to the sisters in different parts of the world who have said a generous yes to God through their first or perpetual professions, and also to the sisters who are celebrating the fidelity of the Lord through their profession anniversaries.

With profound affection and communion,

S. Anna Caiazza
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Superior General