

Homily

Queen of Apostles Sanctuary

A Path of Freedom and Joy

Homily of
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Prefect of the Congregation
for Consecrated Life



I am very happy to be here and to offer my greetings to Fr. Valdir, the whole Pauline Family and today, in a special way, to all the Daughters of St. Paul, your Superior General and her council.

I am truly delighted that you invited me to join you in thanking God for these 100 years of charism and life—a modern charism that is already 100 years old but that was born in this era, has developed rapidly and has already produced great fruit. One thing I admire very much about the Pauline Family is that Fr. James Alberione was a very fecund Founder.

The milestone we are celebrating together gives us the chance to contemplate a story that gives glory to God. St. Augustine said: “When you pray, you give glory to God. And when you are not praying but are involved in the things you should be doing, you continue to give glory to God.” In short, one’s whole life should give glory to God.

Traveling together

The texts you have chosen for today’s Liturgy express this attitude very well. Let us take a look at the trip home we are making; let us look

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at God, who involved us in his life and who is drawing us to himself in Jesus. The first thing to do, in contemplating your charism during this Jubilee, which will continue for a long time yet, is to ask

yourselves what gift you have received through which you can glorify God.

The Council reminded all consecrated persons that our journey should first of all lead us to become disciples of Jesus always more. To become disciples means to live the Word (which is Jesus), the sacraments (which are Jesus) and the Church (which is Jesus). To follow this itinerary means to learn from our one and only Master how to make the trip through life.

In many places today, society no longer wants the presence of God. It is searching for a truth that locks a person in individualism: each person becomes a truth unto him/herself; there is no longer a truth common to all. How can we be disciples today?

Jesus has called the whole Pauline Family—and all the members of the Church—to move ahead in step with the Gospel. The Pope clarified something very important for the spiritual dimension of life. He said that what is proper to consecrated persons—for instance, the Pauline priests and sisters—is not the radicality of the Gospel. This is necessary but it is the foundation for all Christians: married couples, consecrated persons, children, adults, one culture or another.... Everyone must follow Jesus and all of us must live the same values. The Pope has helped us understand that Jesus does not have first-class and second-class disciples.

Therefore we must consider each person who is trying to follow Jesus to be our traveling companion—someone with a different vocation but



following a single path. This means we must travel together.

How can we move from an individualistic journey to the spirituality of communion that John Paul II spoke about? We start out by following the Lord from a self-centered stance but then we are called to cede center place to God so that he can lead us toward our brothers and sisters. Consecrated persons understand this and say *yes* to God's invitation: If you want to follow me more closely, then you must courageously live in genuine poverty and genuine communion. You must courageously understand the importance of virginity. You must also courageously come to understand the authority-obedience relationship in a new light: not as a path of constriction and loss of liberty, but one of freedom and joy....

The characteristic feature of a consecrated person must be *joy*. Joy on one's lips should be the result of joy in one's heart, otherwise we are a little off track. And this joy should be a prophetic sign of what has happened between us and the Lord. We must renew our relationships. The hour of fraternity has arrived.... Fraternal life in our communities must be renewed: community life is not only "the maximum penance"; it also gives us the chance to experience God because when I love others then I am like God: we must become love, in imitation of God, and bring him into the midst of our communities.

The second thing is that we must stop thinking about formation as confined to a specific time, namely: I undergo formation and then, when I am formed, I stop. A disciple of Jesus begins his/her formation in the mater-

We must bring God into the midst of our communities

nal womb and concludes that formation with the last breath he/she takes here on earth. It is only then that the person can say: "Now I am formed!"

Our Founders: Indispensable Points of Reference

This dynamic journey with the Lord—the journey of a person in continual formation, who perfects him/herself ever more, who follows Jesus more closely—is for you [Daughters of St. Paul] and for all of us. It is in our charisms; it is the path of our Founders. They are lights; they are indispensable points of reference.

God has given the Daughters of St. Paul a very up-to-date charism through various forms of communication in all parts of the world. You are missionaries of communication and because of this you must cultivate the dimension of fraternal relations so as to communicate the Good News, which is Jesus. Perhaps, for us, the danger is that we might not feel like we are in communion with one another; we might not feel like we are among brothers and sisters. We must help one another to follow this path, which does not view the human apart from the divine but the human and divine moving ahead together.

We must renew the authority-obedience relationship. We are able to hold positions of authority and to practice obedience only if we feel like brothers and sisters to one another, otherwise the result is slavery, distrust. But if we are truly brothers and sisters, then we participate profoundly in one another's sufferings; we try to understand what is happening at a particular moment in the life of another person; we help each other to move ahead, to persevere....

In the consecrated life, the man-woman relationship must also be renewed. We have made too sharp a distinction between the masculine and feminine worlds, as if one were a temptation to the other. This can't be true because God created man and woman; humanity is both male and female, not just man, not just woman. Renewing the way we look at one another can also renew our view of human love, which becomes beautiful, very beautiful.

May God bless the Daughters of St. Paul. May he bless the whole Pauline Family. May he bless all of us who are seeking, in the Church, to follow Jesus and our Founders.