

Introduction

***“ONWARD” IN TRACING OUT NEW PATHS  
FOR OUR MISSION***

*Sr. M. Antonieta Bruscato, Superior General*

Nairobi, 20 – 30 May 2012

Dearest Sisters,

It is truly a great joy for me to be here with you in this part of Africa to share with one another the faith that enlightens us, strengthen the hope we bear within us, give a “face” to the love of God that urges us on (cf. 2 Co. 5:14) and discover ever-fresh ways of proclaiming the Gospel to the people of this continent, which Pope Benedict XVI defined as “a spiritual ‘lung’ for a humanity that appears to be in a crisis of faith and hope” (*Africa Munus* 13).

By happy and unintentional coincidence, we are beginning our *Continental Meeting for the Apostolate-Economy* on the Feast of the Ascension, which this year is combined with World Communications Day. I would like to highlight several features of these two events that, in my opinion, cast light on our missionary presence and can offer us helpful input for the coming days.

According to recent biblical studies on the Gospel of Mark, the passage of the Gospel proclaimed during today’s Liturgy is actually a postscript to the text and was probably not written by the evangelist. The original text concluded with chapter 16, verse 8, where we are told that three women—Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome—went to the tomb to anoint the corpse of Jesus. When the angels informed them that Jesus had already risen from the dead, “*they went out and fled from the tomb, seized with trembling and bewilderment. They said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.*”

The mission of proclaiming the Gospel was entrusted to persons who were weak, fearful and silent, but who also witnessed to great fidelity to the Lord. In fact, all three women were present at Jesus’ crucifixion on Good Friday and they were the first to hasten to his tomb on Easter Sunday.

And here is the first lesson we should learn, namely, that it is precisely through our *weakness, ignorance, incapacity and inadequacy in everything* that the Lord continues to work out his plan of salvation. It is through our faith in the resurrection, welcomed by hearts that are fearful and at the same time awestruck, that the Lord continues to sow life and hope. It is through our constant struggle to *cast out the demons* that first of all dwell within us (for example, the thirst to be the center of attention, aggressivity, hostility, divisions, etc.) that the Lord enables us to *speak new languages, make the world a better place, and assist those who lack love and fraternal help.*

Thus we feel confirmed in the divine command to “*go out to the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature*” (Mk. 16:15). However, this should not cause us to disregard what the Holy Father says in his message for the 46<sup>th</sup> World Communications Day, whose theme this year is *Silence and Word: Path of Evangelization.*

Benedict XVI says that today we place too much emphasis on speakers and forget that genuine communication is made up of both listening and dialogue. In fact, communication takes place through both word and silence. This silence involves listening to others and also to oneself. As St. Ignatius of Loyola wrote in his Spiritual Exercises, it means listening to and welcoming the promptings of the Spirit. It involves discernment so as to grasp the truly important questions being asked by people today and respond to them.

All this, sisters, is an excellent introduction to our itinerary for the coming days—an itinerary that began some time ago.

In the first half of our governing term (from the 9<sup>th</sup> General Chapter up to the Interchapter Meeting), we launched a *project to redesign various dimensions of the Pauline life.* This project was concretized in important ways on the continental and local levels.

In this second stage of our term of office, we are working together to *redesign the apostolate in the light of our charism,* in line with the Chapter directives and in the light of

the journey already accomplished, so as to rekindle the ardor—the fire—that should characterize every Daughter of St. Paul.

We have already held three Continental Meetings for the Apostolate-Economy: in Seoul, Korea (14-24 June 2011) for our circumscriptions in Asia and the Pacific; in Sao Paulo, Brazil (8-18 August 2011) for those in the Americas, and in Rome, Italy (15-25 January 2012) for the FSPs of Europe and Quebec, Canada.

Now it is the turn of Africa and Madagascar.

In keeping with the suggestion of our Interchapter assembly, the theme of our meeting is: ***Imbued with the Word, we trace out new paths for our mission.***

In line with the proposal of our 9<sup>th</sup> General Chapter to “draw up a general plan of action that includes all the aspects of our mission...” and to “cultivate collaboration with the various categories of laity” (CD 2007, 39-40), integrated with the *Planning of the General Government for 2008-2013* and the recommendations that emerged during the Interchapter Meeting and the continental meetings for redesigning our presences, the purpose of this meeting is to draw up a ***Global Apostolic Project.***

This Project can help the FSPs of Africa and Madagascar respond to the needs of the new evangelization that emerged with great force during the *Synod for Africa* and that have been well defined in the Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus*.

Let us remember that during our continental meeting for redesigning our presences in Africa-Madagascar, you yourselves underscored the need to “remain in step with the Church by assuming the directives of the *Second African Synod*, focusing in a special way on catechesis, the social doctrine of the Church and woman.” And in your continental programming during the Interchapter Meeting, you proposed that our circumscriptions adopt shared itineraries and common activities with regard to the Synod.

We want to live these days ***together***, in intense and profound thanksgiving for the great gift the Lord has given us: *the grace of being apostles* (cf. Rm. 1:5). ***Together***, so that our initiatives foster a journey of hope and dynamic openness to the future.

In view of this, I hope that we will be able to create among ourselves a climate of mutual trust and freedom that will allow us to fully share with one another the many things we carry in our hearts: our yearning to do good, our initiatives and projects, our dreams for the future, and also our inevitable problems and uncertainties....

Our meeting is being held at a very favorable time for the Church: the vigil of two fundamental events: the *Year of Faith* and the *Synod on the New Evangelization*. And on the congregational level, we are preparing for our 10<sup>th</sup> General Chapter (15 August–15 September 2013) and the Centenary of our foundation (2015).

May these important events open our minds, hearts and prayer to the universal horizons that motivated the Apostle of the Gentiles and the disciples he inspired: Blessed James Alberione and Maestra Thecla.

Very best wishes to all of us as we begin our work. May it go ahead well and help us to trace out new paths for our mission, sustained by the bold and prophetic faith that makes it possible for us to say with Paul: “We believe and therefore we speak” (2 Co. 4:13), and that reinforces our conviction that it is urgent to offer everyone “the charity of the truth.”



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Superior General