



HOMILY OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL AT THE CLOSING MASS OF THE INTERCHAPTER 2018

25 FEBRUARY 2018

The episode of the Transfiguration, narrated in the passage taken from the Gospel of Mark that we have heard today, fits very well in the conversion itinerary proposed by Lent. The disciples Peter, James and John are led by Jesus apart on a mountain, by themselves, where they live an experience that eventually turns out to be a step further in their understanding of the nature of Jesus himself and of his identity.

The transfigured face, the shining garments, the cloud and the voice that they listen to reveal that the journey of Christ towards the Cross hides a paschal meaning. This man, walking right towards the Cross, is in reality the risen and glorious Lord. In this revelation is the presence of Moses and Elijah to draw the attention of the disciples. Moses, as we know, represents the Law, Elijah the prophets. In other words, all of Scripture attests that Jesus is the expected Messiah.

The Gospel of the Transfiguration puts energy, gives wings to our hope: evil and darkness will not win; this is not the destiny of Jesus nor of humanity. However, it is not enough to contemplate the glory of Jesus, we must listen to him. In order for men to find the light, they must let themselves be illuminated by his Word. The Father has only one Word that fully reveals him: «*This is my Son, the beloved: listen to him!*» To the disciples of Jesus of yesterday and of today the Father asks them to listen to Jesus, so that by listening to Him they may become like Him, they will learn from Him to be sons of the Father.

Listening is what defines the disciple. The disciple is the one who listens! Rightly, it is in this perspective that Bishop Orlando Brandes, Bishop of Aparecida, spoke to us in the retreat that he preached at the beginning of the Interchapter. He spoke of the need for silence in order to “listen”, to have a quality communication with God, with others, with oneself. Mons. Brandes observed that today there is a lot of noise in the Church and that this makes it difficult to listen to the voice of the Spirit of the Lord.

Evidently, since the Church is composed of men and women, we can say that, in truth, there is a lot of noise in the very heart of people. In addition to the noise, it seems to me that there is also a lot of distraction, so much lack of concentration, attitudes that in turn generate individualism and narcissism. The fascinating world of



new digital technologies also has its downside if we do not know how to use them correctly. So, if we do not listen to the Lord, where will we go? If we do not listen to him, what will we say?

During these days of the Interchapter, other than allowing ourselves to share the journey of the Congregation in a special manner in the last three years, it has also given us an opportune time to listen: listen to the Lord, listen to one another, listen to the Church, listen to the society, listen to the people of God present in the Shrine of Aparecida, listen to the culture of communication... In this attitude of listening, especially regarding the Congregation, we could see signs that speak to us of lights, shadows, perhaps even darkness. However, they cannot scare us, but rather lead us to face them with the power of love and mercy that Jesus, the Master, gives us.

Now, having finished the Interchapter that we have lived under the gaze of the Virgin of Aparecida – a powerful time of experience of God and of fraternity –, we must descend from the “mountain” and go to the plain with the same faith of Abraham. We must return to our service of animation, which can have no other reference except the Gospel, that is, Jesus himself, our Master, Way, Truth and Life. To descend the mountain to put into practice a style of evangelization all inspired by the Apostle Paul and our Founder, Blessed James Alberione, that starts from within our vital environments, an evangelization that leads us to our conversion, to the conversion of our community and our apostolic structures, as our last General Chapter affirmed. An evangelization that helps us to overcome every kind of auto-referentiality and resignation, that leads us to go out, with love, joy and audacity in the culture of communication, using all the means at our disposal.

In fact, as our last General Chapter declared, *«we are the Church and we want to be with the Church a congregation which “goes out”, “on the way” to place ourselves beside to the “new Macedonians” (cfr. At 16:9) who appeal to us: the crowds of today without a shepherd, the forgotten minorities, the excluded ones, those suffering from every infirmity, those socially marginalized, the youth who are not listened to or the victims of modern addictions, the unemployed and the immigrants, those who hunger for bread and truth, those who have excluded God from their lives, those who have lost the meaning of life...»*¹.

We want to make this journey in communion with the whole Pauline Family, with the female Congregations, with the Pauline Institutes of Consecrated Secular Life and with the Pauline Cooperators who, this year, celebrate the centenary of foundation. We are all called to evangelize in creative fidelity to our Founder, bearing in mind that the ideal expressed in these words – “creative fidelity” – evokes a fidelity not so much to the inherited past as to the future. Fidelity is more synonymous with courage, vigour, imagination, boldness that is not fear, dread, routine, repetition.

¹ X General Chapter Declaration “To evangelize today in joy as apostle communicators and as consecrated persons”.



We wish to continue our Eucharist with a heart grateful to the Lord for this Interchapter and to thank, in a special way, the Province of Brazil for what it has done for the successful outcome of this meeting. We also thank all our Pauline confreres and the brothers and sisters of the Pauline Family, who accompanied us with their prayer. May the Lord help us put into practice the decisions we have made.

Let us finish our reflection with the words of our Founder, who tells us: *«Strive to strain forward every day, never stop, neither on the path of holiness, nor in the work of the apostolate. Forward! Always strain forward!»*. This is what we want to do. We want to walk in hope, having in mind the words of Paul of the second reading we have heard: *«In the certainty of Jesus who died, rather, who is risen, who stands at the right hand of God and intercedes for us!»* (Rm 8:34).

Amen!