

**Homily of the Superior General,
Father Domenico Soliman,
during the opening Mass of the Chapter
of the India-Great Britain-Ireland Province**

Pune (India) – 13 January 2023

Dearest brothers,

With this Eucharistic Celebration, we begin the 19th Chapter of your India-Great Britain-Ireland Province, an important stage for our Pauline mission in these three countries. They will be intense days of discussion, of discernment, a time for choices by listening to the Holy Spirit who speaks in a particular way through the Word of God and the social and ecclesial realities in which you live. Days of synodality where mutual listening will be the first attitude that will allow us to be transformed and to renew our mission.

Today's Gospel (Mk 2:1-12) is definitely a very beautiful page for understanding the meaning of the Pauline life. We are facing a dynamic scene where there is not only Jesus and a paralytic but there are also four of his friends and many people. Each of them is important, above all because all together they show us what happens when God works, heals, puts us back on our feet... He is among them.

Let us first think of the paralytic and his friends. What these four people do is the result of a deep love. They do everything to bring him before Jesus, even to the point of removing the roof of the house. Four friends who together see their friend's illness and organize themselves to find a solution: Jesus. If we think about it, it is something that moves us and touches us deeply. Their generosity and industriousness are energies placed at the service of the healing of the paralytic friend. If we look at our history, we find in Don Alberione, that young man who, observing the society of his time, feels he has to do something new. The Spirit leads him to give life to a new apostolate. To seek the good of people and thus directs his life, studies, energies, intelligence... everything of himself. How much good it does to us to look at the example of the four friends and the young James Alberione. And what do we wish to do for our humanity, for God's people and for millions of non-Christian men and women in India, Great Britain and Ireland? In this Provincial Chapter together we want to renew our apostolic thrust, not however each one all by himself and in an uncoordinated way but together, as a body, as a community, as different generations. Together not because everyone does the same thing but because everyone is oriented towards the same mission, with creativity. This is what the four friends of the paralytic did.

In this scene, Jesus does not intervene except when the paralytic is right in front of him. Now, it is Jesus who works, speaks and heals but he needs someone to take care of bringing the sick before him. And looking at these friends and their faith he says: "Your sins are forgiven" This passage is also significant because their industriousness shows their faith: not how good they are, how much energy they have, how capable they are of solving problems... but faith, that is, how much they believe in Jesus and in his power to heal. Thanks to this faith, the paralytic is healed of sin. This miracle can still be renewed today in our life when with our apostolate we manifest faith in the Master. "To manifest" is the meaning of "epiphany", a revelation of our relationship with the Lord.

It is intimacy with him that heals, that takes away sin, that heals from division. The Pauline apostolate therefore is born as a manifestation of our faith, and not only of our abilities. Jesus wishes to see this in us, he loves to meet our faith in him as the Healer, the Saviour, the Teacher.

There is one last passage that I want to share with you and it is the fact that Jesus also heals the sick body. He does it for those who do not believe, for some scribes. By healing him, he manifests that faith forgives sin and heals the sick body. Faith renews the whole person, transforms him for good. Faith makes us new creatures. Yes, the faith of the four friends, of these people who love and experience this love as taking care of a friend.

Here is another way of describing our Pauline religious life and the beauty of our apostolate. The effectiveness of the mission depends on faith and the mission expresses the quality of our relationship with Jesus Master. “Get up and take up your mat” is what we say to each person through our apostolate. As Pauline “editors”, we repeat the same words of Jesus to today’s humanity. Get up, you who do not know Jesus, you who waste your life, you who do not love and do not forgive, who wage war, who think only of yourself... Get up, start over, rediscover your dignity... as a son of God. “Get up and walk” is also the word that Jesus Way, Truth and Life tells us: he takes care of us Paulines, encourages us, sees our difficulties and is close to us, loves being with us, does not treat us as servants but as sons of the Father, shows us that giving life is the secret of our life, renews our mission, tells us that serving is a lifestyle, as well as dialogue and living in synodality.

Let us ask Mary, the first “editor” of Jesus, to teach us to give her Son to the world. Let us renew the enthusiasm of being apostles, our mentality with which we live the mission, our way of living together, the sense of unity and communion that we sometimes forget. Let us renew the desire to listen to today’s poverties in order to guide our mission. Let us allow ourselves to be transformed in our way of thinking to be people who proclaim the Gospel with joy.