



**REV.
FATHER VALDIR JOSÉ DE CASTRO**

7th Anniversary of your Election as Superior General of the Society of Saint Paul

Dear Father Valdir,

We are living in uncertain times in which everything seems complicated, even planning with deadlines, which are often suspended and postponed beyond our control.

Your term of office as Superior General of the Society of Saint Paul has been extended by more than a year, compared with the provisions of the Constitutions. At least that is what is provided for in our timetable. You have to work in an extended time or, as they say in business jargon, you have to work “overtime”.

The words of the prophet Isaiah resound spontaneously: “*My thoughts are not your thoughts and your ways are not my ways*” (Is 55:8). Our plans and programmes are sometimes or often messed up and need to be constantly reshaped, of which we have no guarantees and certainties. This reminds us of our Founder’s invitation to always be in a “movement” of continuous conversion. And the situations we are experiencing, on a social and congregational level, constantly remind us of this.

The prolonged service to the Congregation that is being asked of you, dear Fr Valdir, will certainly require a further exercise of patience and Pauline paternity, but we know well your passion and love for the Congregation and for your confreres, qualities that have characterized all these years of governance.

May the words that the Angel said to the prophet Elijah be a consolation and support to you when he, tired of his mission as a prophet, wanted to give up everything and fell asleep under a broom tree: “*An angel touched him and said, ‘Get up and eat.’ He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, ‘Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.’ So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he travelled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God*” (1 Kings 19:5-8).

The celebration of the next General Chapter, dear Fr Valdir, you are making us understand in every way, is not a simple Chapter of planning and renewal of the institutional offices of the Congregation. It must project the Society of Saint Paul into a new era, in which all the paradigms that have governed religious life until now have entered a crisis and there is an urgent need to “*allow yourselves to be transformed by renewing your way of thinking, so that you can discern the will of God, what is good, acceptable and perfect to him*” (Rom 12:2).

Take courage, Fr Valdir! We accompany you with our prayers and our fraternity, and may the Lord keep you in health and strength of mind.

Faternally

Rome, 4 February 2022

*Father Vito Fracchiolla, Vicar General,
the Councillors General,
the General Government,
the Generalate Community*