



MESSAGE OF THE PROVINCIAL SUPERIOR LAUNCHING OF 50 YEARS OUR LADY OF CHARTRES CONVENT

December 22, 2012

Friends, Sisters, ladies and gentlemen, good morning to you all!

Our Lord Jesus Christ holds Nazareth as one special place close to His sacred heart. And today, as we launch the golden jubilee of Our Lady of Chartres Convent, I can't help but think of OLCC as another Nazareth. Why? It is because Our Lady of Chartres Convent stands as a symbol of the spiritual ideals of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres in the Philippine Province. It serves the purpose of four-in-one - House of Formation, House of Leadership, House of Prayer and House of Discernment.

Nazareth is the place where our Lord grew up and was reared. It is where He spent valuable childhood years (His formative years - teenage and even adult years). It was here where Joseph, Mary and Jesus had their bonding, their special family moments together bathed in intimacy as they spent time with one another, deepening into a beautiful relationship, simple but meaningful. Nazareth is so much part of their lives, the reason why Nazareth is attached to their names – Jesus of Nazareth, Mary of Nazareth and Joseph of Nazareth.

It is in Nazareth where He realized what the Father's business was all about. But much more so, it was in Nazareth that He realized what the Kingdom of the Father was all about - a kingdom of truth, of justice and of compassionate love. Nazareth then is not only a school of the mind, but, a school of the heart, of interiority. Our Lord Jesus Christ didn't know of any other school, except Nazareth. His teachers were of course, Joseph and Mary. With them He grew "in wisdom and in age."

Nazareth honed our Lord for His demanding ministry in Galilee, of Teaching, Healing and Table fellowship (the Eucharist). These ministries prepared Him for the passion and cross in Jerusalem.

Most of you, dear Sisters, had been to Israel for a pilgrimage. You saw and followed the paths that Jesus had treaded. Some even went into deep contemplation and in your own words, "commiserated with the agony of the passion and death." What an experience and I can say, how lucky you are.

It was in Nazareth where Jesus learned the basics of His Jewish faith, His relationship with the Father, sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, and Gospel virtues of humility, trust, patience, compassion, and love. Without Nazareth where He spent his hidden life, no way Jesus Christ would have been ready and prepared for His public life.

Nazareth comes from the Hebrew term (etymology), "netzer" which means a shoot or sprout. This is very well related to the "shoot of Jesse", and Isaiah, the father of David. This symbol and image of shoot or sprout fits perfectly. Shoot or sprout is a symbol of hope, of growth, of bearing fruit, of patient waiting, of something to look for, of great expectation, of great promise. There is no instant fruit, no instant formation.

Our Lady of Chartres Convent, Antipolo City, is just not any ordinary address, ordinary place. It is our House of Formation.

Formation is at the heart of every religious vocation. Hence, every religious community gives formation a special attention and decisive importance. The future of the congregation depends on the quality of formation that we give our young sisters.

Formation in the life of consecration is primarily formation in the spiritual life. We need to form our young Sisters not only to be competent and knowledgeable in order to function effectively in our various apostolic endeavors, but above all to be steeped in prayer, imbued with the values of the Gospel, loving and living with the heart and mind of Christ.

The journey of every formand who passes through the different stages of formation is a journey towards an ever-deepening relationship with the Divine Potter, a journey that knows no time, place or status. It is an inward and spiritual journey towards growth, in union with and configuration to Jesus Christ, "for the good of the Church and service of neighbor."

Our Lady of Chartres Convent was constructed with this view in mind: situated on a hilltop, away from the busy life in the city. It is a sanctuary to many of our Sisters, a place where many beautiful memories are created.

It is here in Our Lady of Chartres Convent, where our aspirants, our postulants, our novices, our Juniors, our Sisters in continuous formation, jubilarians, serene sisters, mid-lifers, youth, are formed and molded into the SPC way of life. It is here where we were taught the ABC's of our SPC Spirituality, and schooled in our identity as SPC, and to quote Fr. Mon Bautista, "It is here that we learn who we are, what we are, and why we do what we do, and what we truly stand for."

So much of our formation takes place here - spiritual, professional, such as: retreats, recollections, renewals, seminars, assemblies, mission orientations. In many ways it is a school for all of us where we are taught how we live our spiritual life – our identity; our charism; our life style; our life of consecration; our vows; our values; our love for the poor; our way of loving.

Like the image of the Potter and Clay (Jer. 18:ff), it is here where we have learned how to be docile, how to be humble, so that God can do with us, like a potter is able to do with clay in his hands. Sisters, you who have lived here and have been formed here, are like clay in the hands of the Divine Potter. You are handled with so much care. You went through much handling, much shaping and re-shaping, not only of mind, but, of interiority, the shaping and forming of hearts.

Our Lady of Chartres Convent is our House of Prayer. So much prayer happens in this house. This is a place in the Philippine Province where Sisters learn to stop, become still before the Lord in His presence, meditate, contemplate, spend time with the Lord.

Here in Our Lady of Chartres Convent, our life of contemplation is the central focus. After immersing ourselves in many activities in the market place, serving, sharing ourselves, giving, ministering, we come to OLCC to rest, to pray. We have opened our doors not only to our friends - religious men and women, but lay as well. They come to be re-energized, re-charged and healed. That's why this place literally can be regarded as "holy" or "sacred" because the most holy activity of formal prayer has happened and had taken place here. God's presence and work has tremendously come and reign.

Besides being a House of Formation and a House of Prayer, Our Lady of Chartres Convent stands for Leadership. It is a House of Leadership where the Council and the Sisters of the Provincial Administration earnestly and passionately seek for the Jesus' way of "creating vision, shaping values and empowering change." A leadership of transformation to become a leader like JESUS is what we constantly begged for in prayers. We know that Jesus in us continues to lead through us.

Much more than a house of Leadership, Our Lady of Chartres Convent is a House of Discernment. Big crucial decisions are done here (through a prayerful, contemplative process of discernment). We have to be led by the Spirit because every decision that we make affect the individual lives of our Sisters and their missions as well. This has a great impact on the entire province, in terms of mission, priorities, ministries, vision and mission, and more importantly affecting in many ways the lives of the people we serve.

Today, with so much gratitude in our hearts, we wish to acknowledge the past Provincial Superiors, their Council members, and Sisters of the Provincial Administration: Mother Charles de Jesus Weiss, (may her soul rest in peace), the Provincial Superior, who built Our Lady of Chartres Convent and was responsible for the transfer to its present site from Quezon City on Dec. 26, 1963, and consequently, the blessing on January 19, 1964; Mother Marie Madeleine Denoga (may her soul rest in peace); Mother Marie Javelosa; Sr Agnes Therese Teves (may her soul rest in peace); and Sr. Mary Magdalen Torres. All my predecessors were visionaries, exceptionally gifted spiritual leaders. If not for their selfless dedication and perseverance, we could not have reaped the fruits of 50 years.

I also would like to thank all the Formators that have served in the capacity of Directresses of Formation. Because of their commitment and role modeling, we who are here now and our Sisters who are in our local communities but could not be with us today, were afforded and given holistic and solid formation to be transmitters of hope in our broken world today. They have nurtured us to be more “docile to the transforming action of the Spirit inviting us to be sensitive and responsive to the challenges and needs of the world in its religious, ecclesial, social, economic and political dimensions.” (Capitular Acts 2007)

Also, it is but fitting to thank all the men and women behind the scenes, who have worked with us here in Our Lady of Chartres Convent, the secretaries, the office staff, the cooks, the gardeners, the housekeeping staff, the laundry women, the handy men, the drivers, the carpenters, the electricians, the plumbers, the security guards, who did their jobs so well that allowed us to devote our time to the mission entrusted to us, for the glory of God and the service of neighbor.

And of course, we say thank you to all our Sisters in the different communities who have supported us generously not only with material resources, but with their sincere manifestation of unending love and concern.

We are grateful in many ways to our lay partners and benefactors who throughout all these years have lavished us with their generosity and care.

So much part of our spiritual life here is our daily Eucharist, the source, summit, and center of our Christian faith. Thank you to our priests' friends who have been very faithful in celebrating the Eucharist with us. I would like to mention in particular His Excellency, Bishop Gabriel Reyes and His Excellency, Bishop Francisco de Leon. Thank you for being part of our life in Our Lady of Chartres Convent.

Thank you too to our friends – Retreat Directors, Counselors, who have journeyed with our Sisters toward spiritual growth through spiritual direction and counseling; and Resource Persons in all our conferences, assemblies and renewal programs. Our Sisters have benefited so much from all these spiritual enrichments.

I would like to say special thanks in behalf of my Sisters, to our main celebrant Fr. Ramon Bautista, SJ, and the three concelebrants, Fr. Percy Bacani, MJ, Fr. Michael Antalan, AM, and Fr. Jose Bautista, for celebrating the Eucharist with us, as we launch the golden jubilee celebration of Our Lady of Chartres Convent today.

Sisters, friends, there's a whole, rich tradition behind Our Lady of Chartres Convent. We who are here now are privileged and therefore, must make sure that we safeguard and preserve this tradition and pass it on truthfully to the coming generations of Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres. This will ensure the unity and future of the Congregation.

For fifty years, Our Lady of Chartres Convent lived up to the ideals for which she is known for and the reasons for its existence. Like a light that never grows dim, it continues to be a haven of peace and serenity, a spring of life, a place of on-going formation and renewal.

My dear friends, Sisters, thank you for being with us today, your presence affirms once again that the Church is alive and we are here, the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres to continue to serve you. Caritas Christi Urget Nos. Our mission has just begun, let us go in peace and proclaim the Good News, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN