

MESSAGE OF THANKS AFTER POSTCOMMUNION PRAYER
Solemn Eucharistic Thanksgiving
29 October 2014
By Sr. Lilia Thérèse Tolentino, SPC

We have finally reached the peak and highlight of our three-day celebration of the 110th Foundation Anniversary of our Congregation in the Philippines. The Symposium on the on he various dimensions of our Religious Life, the Message of our Superior General, Mother Maria Goretti Lee to the Sisters of the Province, the Rite of Remembering and Giving Thanks in the Garden of Peace honoring our deceased Sisters, the cultural presentation, "No Greater Blessing – Images of a Century an a Decade of SPC Presence" – all these serve as prelude to this significant Eucharistic Thanksgiving Liturgy, the great moment, the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres in the Philippine Province have been waiting for.

The French novelist and playwright, Honoré de Balzac, wrote, "When the heart is full, the lips are silent." Today, my heart is indeed full and so are the hearts of my Sisters who are here and those who are unable to come but are with us in spirit and in prayer. I stand here to speak on their behalf. My lips cannot be silent because there are so many blessings fo which to be thankful and so many people to thank for.

First, we count our blessings. We are most grateful to our Father in heaven.

- For a journey of 110 years fully blessed and directed by the Lord, who empowers us with His loving and abiding presence, marked by evangelizing events put up by our four ministri8es of our Philippine Congregation: Formation of Sisters, |Education, Health Care, and Pastoral Ministry.
- For Bishop Frederick Rooker's invitation to the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres to come to the Philippines in 1904 for the protection and strengthening of the Catholic faith and for the Congregation's brave and generous response to it.
- For the grace of 110 years of mission and service in the name of evangelization, which is proclamation, witness, and transmission of the Gospel, the *raison d'être* of our Congregation.
- For the phenomenal growth of the Congregation, marked by the increase of the number of its schools, hospitals, pastoral centers, renewal and spiritual centers.
- For the SPC Philippine Province being the biggest contributor of missionaries serving in foreign missions – in Brazil, Cameroun, Dubai, East Timor, Haiti, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Peru, Colombia, Thailand, the United States of America, and soon to open, the French Congo.

We acknowledge that all these blessings come from our Lord, but He has chosen some people to be the channels through which they have come to us and we thank them.

- Our parents and family for their generosity in giving us to the Lord and supporting our religious vocation.

- The seven pioneers of our SPC Philippine Province who planted the seeds of SPC spirituality and mission on Philippine soil and the deceased SPC Sisters who came after them to continue with indomitable zeal and dedication our founding mission and charism.
- The 11 Provincial Superiors who have come before me and have led the Philippine Province with dauntless courage and zeal and brought it to where it is now.
- The Sisters responsible for our religious formation who have accompanied us in the different stages of our religious life and have guided us on the way to fidelity to the Lord.
- For my Sisters, the 539 Filipina Sisters who include the 65 Filipina Sisters working in foreign missions who inspire me to lead this Province with generosity, courage, zeal, and devotion.

We are grateful to the following persons who have come to join us in our celebration today and have made it specially by their presence and participation.

- His Eminence, Louis Antonio Cardinal Tagle, *preside and homilist*;
- Seven concelebrating Bishops from dioceses where our Sisters serve;
- 40 or more concelebrating priests;
- Our dear Mother Marie Goretti, *Superior General* of the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres;
- The forty-six Sisters of St. Paul who have come to join our celebration – coming from Australia, East Timor, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Thailand, the United States, and the four Vietnamese Provinces of Ho Chi Minh, Danang, Hanoi, and My Tho;
- Representatives of Religious Congregations and Orders, family, friends, relatives, employees, students, alumni, benefactors, business partners, and collaborators of the Sisters in their ministry; and
- The acolytes and servers from the Diocese of "Antipolo.

The above list is rather long and I haven't yet come to the end. I was actually reminded that my message of thanks should not be longer than the homily of his Eminence. For this very special occasion, however, I beg the kind understanding of His Eminence and our liturgists that I be allowed to continue on with my personal "Thank You."

The celebratory events of the last three days, including, of course, this morning's meaningful Eucharistic Liturgy, have deeply touched the core of our being as Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres – activities that have made us appreciate profoundly the meaning and sense of the various dimensions of our religious life; activities that have made us love and appreciate our Congregation's rich and beautiful heritage, the legacy we have inherited from our found, our first Sisters, and, the "more than half a thousand SPC who have been" ... grains of wheat fallen to the ground and died," words borrowed from Sr. Mary Vianney's "Tribute to our Departed Sisters;" activities that have made us experience the joy and beauty of fraternal communion and the internationality of our congregation; activities that have inspired us anew

to deepen our commitment to the Lord and to remain faithful to Him Who called us to be His beloved.

As I went visiting our local communities and dialoguing with each Sister and presiding over long board meetings, things were silently being done here in Antipolo and in some local communities to prepare the various celebratory events. Behind the short, yet sweet, spirit-filled and meaningful celebration are my angels, silently working behind the scene: the members of the Provincial Administration, particularly, Sr. Celeste and Sr. Lirio; the Formators, our aspirants, postulants, novices and Junior Sisters; members of the Provincial Auxiliary Community, and the lay staff of Our Lady of Chartres Convent – they were my hands and feet while I was away. They went beyond the call of duty and the limits of self-sacrifice, generosity and service. I couldn't keep up with their boundless energy, driven by inspiration, obedience, and love for the Lord. I really cannot ask for more. We also thank our architects, engineers, and the work force; our graphic artists, printers, communications, lights and sounds technicians, florists, gardeners, caterers, and many others who assisted us in preparing for this great celebration of thanksgiving.

The members of the Provincial Administration join me in thanking the local SPC communities for their prayers and contributions in various forms and expressions: spirituals, human, material, and financial. We will cherish with much appreciation and gratitude the contributions of individual Sisters in our local communities who shared their God-given talents in the various events and activities during our 3-day celebration. Your names and faces are etched in our grateful hearts.

As we continue our journey beyond our 110 years, we carry on, guided by the teachings of the Church and the Congregation's Capitular Acts, which serve "as the beacon indicating the Will of God for the Congregation" (Mother Myriam Kitcharoen, Cap. Acts 20p01). As Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres, we strongly affirm to live our Christo-centric spirituality in the fullness of the paschal mystery after the example of St. Paul, our Patron, Father Chauvet, our Founder, our first Sisters, and the luminaries and torch bearers of our Congregation (Cap. Acts 2001). We affirm to be "strong in hoe" so that we may fearlessly give ourselves unconditionally to the Lord (Cap. Acxts 2007), and in the spirit of Capitular Acts 2013, we pledge to remain alive in God's Word so that we may be light of the world.

Being women of the future, we move on, striving toward to what lies ahead, filled with faith and confidence to proclaim Jesus Christ as our Lord. May our faith be strong that we may continue to walk in the truth. May our hope be fervent in our tranquil daring and our love strongly impelled by the love of Christ as we continue to give ourselves to God for the good of the Church and for service of our neighbor. Happy Foundation Anniversary, SPC Philippines!

Thank you all.