

CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE
October 28, 2014 – Pasig
Mother Maria Goretti Lee, SPC

Dear Sister Lilia and members of the Provincial Council, dear Provincial, District , Regional |Superiors of other countries, Sisters, students and friends, Good Evening.

Even though the act of speaking before a big crowd is quite a task for me, I cannot deny that it is my joy indeed to be present here among you and to share this memorable event with you. Our Congregation, despite its more than four thousand Sisters, is such a closely knit family. It is easy to feel at home, to be comfortable among the warm welcoming smiles that I meet everywhere.

The atmosphere today is truly filled with the colors and sounds of this joyful celebration: the 110th anniversary of the SPC Foundation in the Philippines. It is good for us to bring to mind once again that 110 years ago the first groups of Sisters of St. Paul reached Dumaguete. The first SPC missionary community in Philippine soil was a remarkable international community composed of Sisters from Europe, America and Asia.

Let us remember this dimension when we thank God in the jubilee liturgy because I believe that this international dimension did not happen by chance or by mere fortunate mélange of historical circumstances. In retrospect, using the eyes of our faith and reading through the light and shadows of history of the Philippine Province, we could discern God's hidden meaning behind the international quality of the Philippine Province from the day of its birth in 1904! The image of that boat at Dumaguete beach is unforgettable. It is a constant reminder for all of us to make alive the charism of charity, the Christocentric paschal spirituality and the missionary impetus of the first Sisters not only from jubilee to jubilee, but also in our daily effort to live authentic religious lives.

We can say that our own apostolic fervor and missionary today are, but new flames of the original fire that our Sisters of previous centuries and decades have caught from our founder and first sisters and have transmitted to their younger Sisters from generation to generation until it reached the Sisters who are still alive in the actual apostolic ministries of our time. Thus in the Philippines, we can clearly point to our missionary link with the first 7 Sisters.

The Philippine SPC History tells us that in Cebu, before they even reached Dumaguete, young ladies asked to join the Sisters and sailed with them in the same boat for Dumaguete. I think this is a special grace for the Philippine Province. The Lord has blessed the Philippines with many vocations for its numerous

ministries in Education, Health Care and Pastoral Care without forgetting the vocations for the foreign missions or the mission ad gentes. For many decades, the Filipino missionaries have demonstrated their gift of adaptation to foreign cultures working among the peoples in Thailand, USA, Indonesia, France, Italy, Ireland, Brazil, as well as the African countries: Madagascar, Cameroun, Central Africa and for a short time even in Korea. And very recently, Filipina Sisters have opened communities in Hawaii, in United Arab Emirates and will be soon in Congo.

As Superior General, I take this opportunity to thank you, dear Sisters, in the Philippines, for your great contribution to the mission ad gentes. The entire Congregation is grateful for your generosity in continuously sending Sisters even though you have also many local apostolic projects. At this point, let me be open with you to say that I continue to count on the generosity of the Philippine Province to continue giving us missionaries for the many places that are begging us to help them.

It is precisely why this occasion is a beautiful moment to give thanks to God for the rich blessings this Province has received: in the growth of its education ministry which is remarkable for its impact in the cities, but likewise, in its country-wide organization that assures education in the depressed areas; in the 15 hospitals and 15 pastoral centers where the distinctive Paulinian warmth and simplicity open the way for lay partners to share our charism and spirituality in the service of the sick and the most deprived.

I also would like to congratulate you most especially for your dynamic response in the aftermath of every natural calamity that hits the Philippines. I commend our well-organized networking to deliver effective help and relief to the victims of typhoons, floods, earthquakes, landslides, etc. The capacity to translate your sympathy and charity into concrete action for rapid assistance to a great number of persons should be expressed in our prayers of praise for it is one of the marks of being God's channels of charity and compassion, to raise the spiritual and material level of God's children.

In this 110th celebration, may I invite each one of you – here in the Philippine and in all the other Provinces, Districts and Regions – to look deeply into your hearts and listen to what these 110 years of life and mission tell us about the challenges of our SPC religious life right now and in the next ten years. The anniversary of our foundation invites us to look at the things accomplished and thank God for them; secondly, there is also the call to discern how the Lord's hand had been leading us through the years. Have we been sensitive to his guiding hand through persons and events? Or have we listened more to the other voices that distract us and draw us far from the path that is in conformity with the Father's will?

As we stand at this point of our SPC history, God has given us the reasons to rejoice to give thanks and celebrate; He also asks us to make him the choice of our hearts – a choice that resounds with Mother Marie Anne de Tilly's response to " give ourselves to God for the good of he church and for the service of neighbor." I short, in what may will you express that response to a new conversion and a new evangelization of today?

May God bless Philippine Province, all SPC in the world.

Thank you.