

INTRODUCTION

Launching of the 110th Foundation Anniversary of the Sisters of St. Paul
Philippine Province
June 21, 2014

On this, the 304th anniversary of the passing away of our Founder, Father Louis Chauvet, we begin a series of activities to remember and give thanks for the 11th decade of the presence of the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres in the Philippines.

Father Chauvet had a dream – a simple but profoundly evangelical dream. He dreamed of bringing the teaching, healing, shepherding Jesus to a small village in France mired in ignorance and poverty in the wake of the Hundred Years War. There in the middle of wind-swept Beauce, he dared to make his dream a reality. He inspired a handful of simple village girls to incarnate the charity of Jesus by serving in the tiny parish – teaching the children and caring for the sick and the marginalized. The realization of that dream in the village of Levesville-la-Chenard soon found a home in the seat of the Diocese, the cathedral city of Chartres, under the patronage of the Bishop who gave the fledgling community a name and a definition of their following of Jesus. As Sisters of St. Paul, they embraced the paschal Christocentricity of the apostle St. Paul and his missionary spirit. Thus the dream of Father Chauvet, nurtured by succeeding generations of Sisters of St. Paul, began to journey beyond Levesville and Chartres and to be incarnated in various lands and cultures.

The Sisters reached the Philippine shores more than two hundred years later. And so here we are – a century and a decade after seven Sisters of St. Paul of

Chartres landed in our country to start again the realization of Father Chauvet's evangelical dream. Here we are, giving flesh to our Founder's dream according to the circumstances and demands of our own historical milieu, in ways he could not have imagined.

The few young women Father Chauvet started with in Levesville have become - in the span of one hundred and ten years - a veritable army of Filipina SPCs. The tiny basement primitive "cave" in Levesville where our founding Sisters taught children - today in the Philippines is equated with hundreds of classrooms, many of which are equipped with modern technological teaching aids. The care of the sick that Father Chauvet asked the first Sisters to undertake, now translates in the Philippines into world-class hospitals. The marginalized, especially those deprived of basic knowledge of the faith, receive "shepherding" care from small communities of SPCs in pastoral centers, attending to their education, health, and socio-economic needs, and training volunteer catechists for Philippine public schools.

The essential mission of bringing the love of Christ to his people has remained. The passing of the years has brought changes in strategy and approaches; but Father Chauvet's dream of incarnating the Word among God's people, still takes on flesh and life in the teaching, healing, shepherding presence of SPC Sisters, their collaborators, and their institutions and programs.

All these need to be remembered, pondered on, appreciated, and cherished. All these are matters for prayer and thanksgiving. We count the passing of years and we count the blessings the Lord has sent us through the years. In remembering, we discover the marvelous thread of God's constant call and gift in our life as a religious congregation and in our individual lives as part of this congregation. We remember and give thanks; we remember, give thanks, and celebrate.

It is fitting that our main celebratory expression is the Eucharist - the thanksgiving *par excellence*. During and through this Eucharist, we are invited to discover how the history of salvation penetrates and permeates our congregational history, especially as called forth in the Philippines. Like Mary our Mother, let us ponder and cherish in our hearts our history as God's living Word uttered on Philippine soil for the past 110 years. Let us discover the Eucharistic pattern in our eleven decades of presence in this beloved land - how we have been called and gathered together, how our humanness and cultural gifts have been taken - as "fruit of the earth" in the Philippines; as "work of human hands" - Filipino hands, our people's hands. Let us remember and give thanks for having been blessed so abundantly - with vocations, with saintly, heroic, and wise Sisters who raised us to higher levels of discipleship, with problematic Sisters who gave us the opportunity to mirror the understanding and compassion of Jesus; with the goods of the earth, with knowledge, expertise, and skills we can share; with the good will and love of the great and small. Let us remember and give thanks for the times when we experienced being broken by the exacting and at times unbearable demands of life and work, by the uncertainties of time and events, by the disillusionment arising from unexpected disloyalty and hostility. We remember with gratitude that in our brokenness we then found the entry point into paschal discipleship. Let us remember and give thanks for the privilege of being given as bread to a world hungry for the word of truth and for healing love; for the many ways we became the "spiritual food" for countless students in our schools, patients in our hospitals, for people with problems in faith and life, for co-workers/co-apostles, for catechists, teachers, doctors, nurses, caregivers and pastoral workers. We have been bread with Jesus the teacher, Jesus the healer, Jesus the shepherd.

**The Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres, Philippine Province @ 110:
Alive in the Word ... Light of the World.**

Deo gratias!