

**HOMILY OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL, FATHER DOMENICO SOLIMAN,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING
OF THE COURSE OF PREPARATION FOR PERPETUAL PROFESSION**

Jesus just said: «If your brother commits a sin seven times a day against you and returns to you seven times saying: “I am sorry”, you should forgive him (Lk 17: 4), to which the disciples answered him: “Increase our faith”» (Lk 17:6). There is a strong link between the words of Jesus and those of the disciples, between forgiveness and the faith that is so necessary. Indeed, Jesus desires the disciples to be merciful like his Father. Yet there is something impossible in the disciples’ response: how can one be merciful in the manner of the Father? Therefore, our faith should increase so that we too, at least a little, can be people who live mercy, who express gestures of welcome, forgiveness, reconciliation.

In fact, faith is necessary because it is the only one capable of making possible what the narrowness of the heart and the pettiness of thoughts prevent. Only faith puts us in the right perspective, which is for those who live according to God who always forgives, so that even for us it is possible to forgive seven times a day! Indeed, who can say to a mulberry: «Be uprooted and planted in the sea» (Lk 17: 6)? There is a need for faith, not in us, but in Christ, in his Father who is mercy, who continually forgives, even in our day.

If we think about it, faith is such a lively relationship with the Father that it enables us to continually move our boundaries, so as «to help us to change our way of seeing, reasoning, loving, choosing. It moves my horizon, my mentality, the way I see my brothers and sisters, my family members, my work colleagues, the way of interpreting what I am living». We need new, unique points of view and go further. It is urgent that the relationship with the Father, in Christ, should take us beyond our small and closed mentality.

The same faith is necessary to «revive the gift of God that is in you» (2Tm 1:6). These are the words that St Paul writes to his disciple Timothy placed at the head of the community of Ephesus. He reminds him that God «has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of strength, charity and prudence» (2 Tim 1:7) and also gives him the possibility of suffering together with Paul for the Gospel, now that the Apostle is in prison. This is what the Father does for us, for his children, for those who are witnesses of his mercy. He gives us “strength”; he makes us people of “charity”, “prudent” or capable of discernment, so necessary in life. Let us not forget to look at what God gives us, that which he gives us more than we deserve.

«Increase our faith» are the words that the Church still addresses to the Lord seeing what humanity lives today, because it is not easy to overcome the divisions between peoples, the social crises that put in difficulty those who work, the families, the more fragile ones... «Revive the gift of God that is in you» is the invitation that St Paul addresses to all of us not to be timid or tasteless Christians, but people who take care of the future, of creation and of those in so many ways hold out their hands for help.

In this Eucharistic celebration, there are eleven young Paulines who begin a special journey: they prepare themselves for Perpetual Religious Profession, for their definitive “yes”. They come from the Philippines, Colombia, Congo and India. They are among us because their mission will be among the people of God. Their “yes” comes from the “yes” of Blessed James Alberione and the Apostle

Paul. There is need for people who take evangelization to heart in the culture of communication, who find themselves where humanity lives today: the Internet, social networks, communication in general. Who of us do not surf the net, do not get information through the web, do not live in some social networks, do not like to see a video on YouTube or read a book...? Each of them, even if in a different way, will take care of all of them so that in this existential place – communication – one could meet someone who points to Christ, to find the reasons for living.

Together with these young Paulines of ours we repeat: «Revive the gift of God that is in you», the gift of faith, of the Pauline vocation because only in this way can we say “yes” to a definitive call, to a demanding mission, a gift of the Spirit given to the Church so that she continues to be merciful like the Father.

Rome, Shrine of Mary Queen of the Apostles, 2 October 2022

Father Domenico Soliman
Superior General