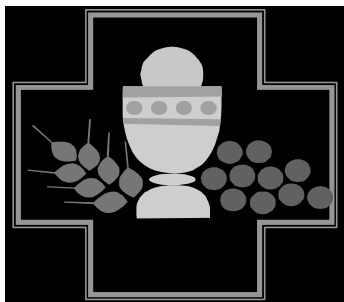


## Message from the Director

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# As Branches on the Vine...

Dear Companions of Pauline,

On April 25, we had a three-fold celebration here at the Motherhouse. We welcomed 15 new Companions of Pauline to our circle, we celebrated the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Companions of Pauline in the North American Eastern Province, and we commemorated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beatification of Mother Pauline. Quite some things to celebrate, don't you think?

The day began with a beautiful liturgy celebrated by Rev. Edward Flanagan, pastor of Nativity of Our Lord Church in Monroe Township. As a child, Father Flanagan attended St. Nicholas School, Jersey City, and was educated by our Sisters there. Liturgy was followed by a festive dinner in St. Joseph Hall. As all (approximately 200 attended) were enjoying dessert, the ACS students and those in SCC formation sang a beautiful hymn to Mary. This was followed with a talk by Judy Fisher who attended the meeting in Rome with me. The day concluded by viewing several slides of the Beatification ceremony and a hymn to Mother Pauline.

All agreed that despite the gloomy weather outdoors, it was a day of great sunshine and inspiration indoors.

I would like to "suspend" the account we have been doing on the novitiate years of Mother Pauline with the text of the talk given by Judy so that you can share in a bit of the meeting we attended.

With love and prayer,  
Sister Joseph

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## International Meeting of Sisters and Associates

From February 22 to February 26, 7 Sister Directors and a representative of the Associates from each province, delegation and unit of the Sisters of Christian Charity met daily with Sister Adalberta, Superior General, at the Generalate in Rome. From March 1 to March 5, we met daily at the Motherhouse in Paderborn. The purpose of the meetings was to share with each other how the Associate Program was formed in each location, how it is working within a variety of cultures, and to consider its role in planning for the future of the Congregation.

From the moment Sr. Joseph and I arrived at the airport in Rome, we came face to face with the fact that we are global. Arriving at the same airport at the same time was the Associate representative from Germany, Marion Weisner, who would be traveling with us by train from the airport back to the Generalate. We worried—what will we say to her? But, thank God, she spoke very good English. Our meetings were conducted in English, which was spoken or understood by all but two of the Associates—the two from South America. Each of those women sat next to a Sister who translated for her, although sometimes it was not necessary to translate because Sister Adalberta spoke directly to them in Spanish, and sometimes she spoke in German or Italian. She is a remarkable woman. She reminded us from the very first meeting—the goal of the Associate Program is not UNIFORMITY, but rather UNITY IN DIVERSITY. And we are diverse.

In the Philippines, we are known as “Kaisa ni Mother Pauline” which means “one with” Mother Pauline. The Associates have been in existence since 1995. There are two Sisters at Margaretha Home for the Blind in Manila and 41 Associates, some of whom live on a different island, a great distance from the core group. Sister Maria Dolores and Sister Theresia (from Germany) staff a residential home for about 14 blind girls and young women. Every Monday afternoon they open their house to any Associates who can come for prayer and light refreshments. The Associates are very active in the blind home, volunteering as readers, guides on outings, and preparers of teaching materials. Sr. Maria Dolores was accompanied by Linda Barrera, who has been an Associate for about 10 years. Sister works hard to communicate on a regular basis with the Associates who live on other islands. Very few have computers, so e-mail is not an option, and phone calls would be expensive. She sends letters and printed materials in bulk, which are transported by boat and bus. They gather in local groups with a lay leader, and try to meet with the Sisters annually.

The ministry in the Philippines has been adopted by the Associates in Rome, who are known as the “Amici de Madre Paolina”—the friends of Mother Pauline. They have been in existence since 1998. They meet at the Generalate with Sister Immacolata who is the only native Italian

Sister in the Community and with the Generalate Sisters who are free at the time. On the walls of their meeting room are the pictures of every resident of Margaretha Home in the Philippines. They know each resident by name. Periodically they conduct fundraisers and send the proceeds to Sr. Maria Dolores so she can buy special treats for the girls. While we were in Rome we were invited to take part in one of their meetings and get to know some of them, in addition to Gabriella Poppi del Russo and Angelica Stupino, who attended our international meeting. The Amici were very excited to see Sr. Maria Dolores and Linda Barrera, and to hear first-hand about the blind residents that they sponsor. The biggest obstacle faced by the Amici is a lack of materials about Mother Pauline translated into Italian. Some of their group are working diligently to translate Mother Pauline’s maxims into modern day Italian. It made me stop and think how lucky we are to have volumes of Mother Pauline’s letters and retreat notes, and various biographies in English.

In Uruguay and Argentina we were originally called the “Damas Paulinas.” Beginning in 1988, groups of mothers of school children and teachers in the Sisters’ schools began to meet with the Sisters to form their cultural interpretation of the Associate program. Today there are only 28 Sisters divided between the two countries, but 84 Associates. The geographic distance between the two locations is very great and it is very expensive to get everyone together. They try to do so every other year. However, an annual retreat is held, and local groups meet more frequently. Their membership includes both men and women. Sister Maria Graciela represented the Sisters, and Claudia Mura represented the Damas at our meeting. They were assisted by Sr. Maria del Rosario, a General Councilor, who helped with translation. Claudia has offered to create a blog for all the Associates, which is intended to be accessed on the Generalate website.

Our Associates in Chile are known by the acronym “CEMIC” which means the Eucharistic Community of Mary of the Immaculate Conception.” They number 176, as compared to 99 Sisters, and are highly organized. Their handbook will be made available to all the Provinces. At the last Provincial Chapter, representatives of the Associates were invited for the last 2 days, and shared a presentation of Mother Pauline’s charism. Their President is a lay woman, Gladys Valenzuela, who attended our meeting with Sister Cecelia, both of whom live in Santiago. When the earthquake struck Concepcion and Santiago while we were still in Rome, all of us felt the fear and anxiety of our two members, as Gladys tried to reach her husband and children, without success, as phone lines were down and internet service was disrupted. Only the next day did she find out that all of her family was still alive, and we learned that all of the Sisters were safe.

The earthquake made all of our group aware of the bond

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that unites us as one, though we are continents apart. It made me very aware that we must **want to** learn about all of our members, all over the world, and be open to support one another through prayer and communication. So--those of you who know a little bit of Spanish, consider attempting to communicate once the Associates' blog is in place. Exact grammar is not important--as all of us learned. We stumbled through Italian/Spanish/German, but we managed to communicate and laugh a lot.

In Germany there are several levels of participation in the Associate Program. In the 1940's, as the beatification process was underway, the "Paulinenbund" provided prayer and monetary support to the Sisters. Over the years some wanted more connection to the Community so they participated in retreats, organized pilgrimages, and studied the life of Mother Pauline. Eventually two "Paulinengruppe" were formed and they are the most similar in structure to our Companions--the Siegborg Paulinengruppe and the Attendorn Paulinengruppe. One of the members of the Siegborg Paulinengruppe attended our meeting--Marion Wiesner, who is a house mother at the residence for special needs children in the town of Siegborg, near Cologne. Children from a very young age up through late teens live there--one of the very early missions of the Community still in existence. The Director of the German Associates is Sister Christhild, who is a provincial councilor at the Motherhouse, a retreat director, a fabulous artist, and creator of the twice a year publication, the "Paulinenbrief." I was most surprised when Sr. Christhild and Marion told us that the concept of a covenant on the part of Associates is not possible in Germany. No one is willing to make a commitment--it is just not part of the German culture. The Paulinenbund prays for the Sisters and the work of the Congregation, assists in producing the Paulinenbrief, and members of all the three levels of participants have the opportunity to make retreats in the retreat center(which was the original Motherhouse where Mother Pauline's office and bedroom are located). More recently a "Paulinenring" has been formed for those who want to meet more frequently at the Motherhouse.

In the Western Province, there are also levels of participation in the Associate program. Sr. Pauline, the Director, and Kathleen Soupenne, representative at our meeting, told us about the "Prayer Associates" (those who live too far away or are in poor health and cannot attend meetings) and the Companions, who meet regularly. Both North American Provinces chose the name "Companions of Pauline" when membership spread to priests, and was no longer a "lay" program. It was in the Western Province that the Associate program was born in the early 1980's. One of their Sisters visited all of the convents, introducing the idea and telling the Sisters about such programs that many other religious congregations were forming. In 1985 they formally asked the Gen-

eral Council for permission to establish a group of Lay Associates. With great hesitation they were given permission, on an "experimental" basis. Today the Companions far outnumber the Sisters--153 Companions and Prayer Associates to 59 Sisters. Their geographic area is vast--from Minnesota to Michigan to New Orleans. They have very faithful cluster groups with lay leaders in various cities where the Sisters are no longer living and working. At least once a year Sister Pauline travels to each location to meet with them, and they send her minutes of their meetings and accounts of their volunteer ministries. Companions are very active daily at Sacred Heart Convent to help with the elderly Sisters. The West has developed a very organized 5-year plan that introduces a new Companion to the life and work of Mother Pauline through videos, books, CD's and printed materials. A Sister is in touch with each new member as he/she works through each year of formation. The West has made their wonderful resources available to the East, as well, and Sister Joseph is looking for ways to share these resources with our Companions. The Companions in the West have participated in the Provincial Chapter and Provincial Assemblies. At an Assembly last year a day was set aside just for sharing between the Sisters and the Companions on the topic of Mother Pauline's spirit and charism. It is very expensive for most Companions to travel to such meetings because of the great distances, but Kathleen Soupenne told us she decided to make the thousand mile trip from New Orleans to Chicago, and spent some wonderful days with the Sisters.

And that brings us to the Eastern Province, where the Lay Associate Program was first discussed in 1993, and the first Lay Associates made their Covenant in April, 1995. Some here today were in that first group, and are now celebrating 15 years as Companions of Pauline. We all salute you, for you made our gathering here today possible. After 15 years, we are still defining and refining the relationship between the Congregation and the Companions. No matter the path we follow, we are all walking in Mother Pauline's footsteps and keeping alive her vision of life in the Church.

To be continued in the next newsletter.



*Congratulations to the following  
new Companions  
who made their Covenant on April 25:*

**Allentown**

Lee Yevak  
Ann Yost

**Bernardsville**  
Marianne Parsiak

**Danville**  
Lori Fraser

**Metuchen**  
Frank Burke  
Frank Belmont

**Monroe Township**  
Connie Heuser  
Elaine Fourman

**Ocean City**  
Barbara Barrett  
Janet McIlhenny  
Cindy Chemerys  
Angie Risoli  
Kay Gross  
Mary Ann Struthers

**Rockaway**  
Elizabeth Kajajian



**Prayer  
Corner**



Please remember in your prayers  
the following who went home to  
their eternal reward since our last  
newsletter:

Sister Marcelene Riffin

Anne Manto,  
Companion of Pauline from Bernardsville

Joseph Psarsky,  
husband of Companion of Pauline  
Mary Psarsky from Allentown

Dolores Shankwsiler,  
Companion of Pauline from Allentown

Genevieve Zukowsky,  
Mother of Companion of Pauline  
Lee Ann Burke,  
Metuchen

**If you have an e-mail  
address and it is not  
listed in the directory,  
please send it to  
Sister Joseph at:**

**[srjoseph@scceast.org](mailto:srjoseph@scceast.org)**

