

OPENING ADDRESS

SR. M. ANTONIETA BRUSCATO
SUPERIOR GENERAL

Dearest sisters, welcome to Nairobi, “the green city under the sun,” as it is called because of its immense forests and mild climate. Welcome to this beautiful house, the headquarters of our East Africa Delegation—a house that resounds with the voices of our young women in formation and the “hymn” of apostolic fervor.

Here, in the coming days, we will be living the “African” stage of the journey of *redesigning our presences*. Here we will pray, study, think and dream together.... Here we will put into practice the art of listening to and communicating with one another in a spirit of hope and love, mutual sharing and communion.

It is truly a gift of God to be in Africa right after the close of the Special Synod of Bishops for this continent, which took place in Rome from 4-25 October 2009. As I wrote in my introduction to the booklet dedicated to “reading” the continent of Africa-Madagascar with wisdom and from a spiritual perspective, once again Divine Providence “has interwoven our paths with those of the Church, which has given us the mandate to communicate the Gospel to all peoples through all the instruments and modes of communication.”

For three weeks spotlights from both the Catholic and non-Catholic parts of the world were trained on this “continent of hope”—a continent that is perpetually seeking reconciliation, justice and peace. The sage observations of the African bishops, their frank comments, the courage with which they faced the continent’s problems, and their farsighted and Gospel-based proposals were a lesson to all of us. It was not by accident that the Holy Father, in offering us an initial “balance sheet” of the Synod, declared: “We were able to find the path to unity in the diversity of our experiences.”

What a lesson for us, sisters, who are called to “*redesign our presences so as to feel that we are one body, share our resources and frailties, and broaden our hearts to embrace the needs of humanity....*”

The Synod told the whole world that the issues that must be faced in Africa are huge and the challenges difficult. It also said that the continent can and must find in itself the resources it needs to bring about change. The cry of the final message of the conclave: “*Africa, rise up and walk!*” is very eloquent in this regard.

We cannot help but link this appeal (*Rise up!*) to the command of the risen Christ to Saul on the way to Damascus. Jesus helped him get back on his feet after his fall and revealed to him a new goal to reach: “*Go into the city and you will be told what you are to do.*”

Sisters, the Synod tells us today that we must *get to our feet and enter Africa*. The Church—the “Ananias” of our times—has taken us by the hand and is guiding us toward this continent of a thousand faces so that we might discern the paths the Lord is opening for our mission as heralds of the Gospel in the world of communication.

The Synod told us that to be concerned about Africa is to be concerned about the equilibrium of our entire planet.

For us today, redesigning our presence in Africa means contemplating the eternal plan of the Father for our whole Congregation.

This second Continental Meeting follows right on the heels of the one we held in the Philippines from 9-20 September 2009. We have been preparing for the present encounter for months in a truly “choral” way. My heartfelt thanks to each of you for what you have done to concretize the Project, *Where the Lord Is Leading Us*. Guided by the Spirit, you implemented the lines of action we sketched out together during the Enlarged Council Meeting held in Rome in January 2009.

In keeping with the strategy chosen for this journey, namely, to involve all the members of the Institute in this process, you creatively and courageously sought to make every sister a participant and protagonist in our redesigning project through precise and pertinent information and an intense animation aimed at helping everyone come to better understand the profound meaning of “redesigning,” which first of all involves revitalizing our lives.

Together with your sisters, you also studied the current situation of this continent and of the countries in which we are present so as to determine what concrete steps to take in the redesigning process in order to live and communicate the message of Christ today with the freshness and fecundity that characterized the apostolic activities of the first sisters who planted the Pauline seed in this land.

What will we do in these days? We will try to bring into sharper focus the plan of God for Africa-Madagascar, seek to identify the “innovations” that are already present in our midst, rediscover the meaning of our missionary vocation, and grow in our sense of being “universal women” who feel at home in every part of the world. The coming days will be demanding but they will also stoke the fires of our zeal.

I want to offer my sincere thanks to Sr. Maria Kimani and her governing team, as well as to the sisters of the Nairobi community and the whole Delegation, for their efforts to foresee our every need in order to ensure that this meeting will be a success. Thank you for your warm and festive welcome. And thank you because, during the days of the Synod, you made us feel proud (a “holy” pride, naturally!) to be members of this admirable Congregation. We still carry in our hearts and minds the picture of Sr. Teresa Marcazzan offering the Pope and the Synod Fathers the *Breviary for Africa*—a truly splendid gift of the Daughters of St. Paul to the Church of Africa, as was said on that occasion. During that presentation, the spotlight of the entire world was focused on our extraordinary mission.

I would like to thank as of now Sr. Battistina Capalbo, who will act as facilitator of our work in these days. I also want to thank the sisters of the Preparatory Commission—Sr. Ana Maria Killing, Sr. Natalia Maccari, Sr. Annamaria Gasser—and all those who worked “behind the scenes” to prepare for this event.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us in these days to support and enlighten us. We entrust ourselves to the powerful intercession of Blessed James Alberione, Maestra Thecla and all the sisters who preceded us, fecundating the Pauline apostolate on this continent with their holiness.

Sisters, let us get to our feet and enter this continent so as to find out what we must do here.

Best wishes to everyone for a good meeting!


Sr. M. Antonietta Bruscato
Superior General