



Altar of St. Joseph's Cathedral in Dar-es-Salam

Common Letter Nr 15
Rome, January 2009

My dear Sisters,
Happy feast of St. Scholastica!

...but the greatest is love (I Cor 13, 13)

We may consider ourselves blessed for having a Saint, our **Saint Scholastica**, about whom we know so little, yet what we know is enough: the greater love is her characteristic. The participants of the Prioresses' Meeting for sure remember the vibrant Eucharistic celebration in St. Joseph's Cathedral in Dar-es-Salaam, on September 8, 2008. There had been time before the Mass to quietly meditate on the interior of the Cathedral, built by the Benedictines a hundred years ago. The High Altar donated by the Kaiser of Germany, Wilhelm II, shows in a three-part picture the Holy Family, flanked by **Benedict** on the right and **Scholastica** on the left. The white dove, symbolizing the Holy Spirit, comes from above to the ear of St. Benedict while with St. Scholastica she rests on the breast, on the heart. Of course, Benedict and Scholastica are twins and cannot be separated, thus to listen and to love cannot be separated. *Listen with the ear of your heart*, is the very first appeal of St. Benedict and our Constitutions reverberate an attitude of St. Scholastica: *"The more we become open to the action of the Spirit, the more he will conform us to Jesus Christ and lead us to the perfection of love .(II,2)*

In Pope Benedict XVI' New Years' Angelus-address to our world torn apart by war and financial crisis, I overheard a very simple way what "greater love" could mean. He said hope for a better future, does not mean to trust in a more fortunate destiny or in the modern trends of markets, but rather to make the effort ourselves to be a little "*piu buoni*", which means to be a little more kind, or have a little bit more of love.

Now I would like to share with you about a recent two days' meeting of the UISG Roman Constellation, that is the Superiors General residing in Rome. The theme expressed a common concern: "Fragility of Vocation". I sent the two main conferences to the Prioresses and Superiors of the Generalate District. The group discussions and reflections provided valuable insights:

- Fragility of vocation concerns not only the young ones, but all of us, even those above 60.
- Fragility does not lie only in the personal structure of the young vocations but also in the trends of our world.
- Fragility, personal and communal, is not only a weakness, but it is a chance, an opportunity, a resource.
- Fragility is a call to the center of our being, our relationship with God, and to solidarity with one another and with our fragile world.
- Our fragility makes us discover the merciful love of God and express it in the acceptance, help and encouragement to our Sisters with whom we are on the way.

With this last point we are again with St. Scholastica, whose love was greater than her fragility.

Under the topic fragility and greater love we can also include our founder Father Andreas Amrhein. On December 29, 2008, as agreed in the Prioresses' Meeting, we commemorated his death anniversary. Here in the Casa we had Mass for him. What fitting Gospel the Liturgy of the day offered to us! "*Lord, now let your servant go in peace.. my eyes have seen the salvation... a light to reveal you to the nations...*" and in the first Reading we had heard: "*... whoever loves his brother remains in the light....*" (1 John).

Our Casa Community is passing through a moment of grace as well as fragility. The RB Course gives a colorful and lively mixture of nationalities and monastic orientations. Compared with the two previous courses the participation of monks has doubled, that is, there was one in the previous years and now there are two. When we are together in the Chapel for the Eucharist we are a big community, but the Casa Community is diminishing in number. In December – January, we lost three members: Sr. Terese Ordoño, Sr. Maria Luisa Villanueva and Sr. Hosanna Kim. For one reason or another they returned to their homeland.

Some changes have occurred in the Generalate District. Since December 8, 2008, Sr. Antoinette Adelman is the Superior of the Shanti Nivas Community in Punalur, India and since December 30, 2008, Sr. Mirjam Schweiger is the Superior of Mother of Wisdom Community in Meihekou. I ask your special prayer for China since this year important steps will have to be undertaken. In Jinja, the new Superior, Sr. Mary Vincent Feliciano, was already present at the Prioresses' Meeting. Other movements there are going on. Sr. Athanasia Simon, former Superior, will belong to Ndanda Priory. A new missionary will come from Seoul, Sr. Vita Bang, while Sr. Maximilian Rho will return to Seoul after her 4-year assignment. There is still another move in Jinja, but it seems to be postponed month after month: the move to the new convent building.

In January this year, a meeting with a rather long name is taking place in Olinda, Brazil: the Hispano-Lusofono Meeting, meeting of Portuguese and Spanish-speaking Sisters. In our Congregation this group is a minority, but I was rather astonished at the UISG meeting seeing that Spanish surpassed all other languages, even Italian here in Rome.

In our last Newsletter, the rather busy Agenda of the Generalate for 2009 was published. It started on the eve of New Year with Sr. Salette's visit to Angola. Then the trip of Sr. Adelaida and Sr. Terese for the Manila election Chapter, whose outcome, the re-election of M. Mary John Mananzan, is surely known to everybody. We continue the agenda with the visitation in Tutzing and go on with the never ending elections and visitations. However, the high point will be the Opening of the 125th Jubilee year on September 24 in Norfolk during the International Formators' Meeting.

May I end this letter with one of the conclusions of the UISG Meeting: "We believe that our fragility is an opportunity and a condition God gives us in order to re-create our fidelity"

Lovingly,

Sr. Angela Strobel O.S.B.