

**CLOSING REMARKS**  
**SERVICE AWARDS – JANUARY 25, 2017**  
**THEME: “STRENGTHENING OF COMMUNION OF COMMUNITIES AT 105”**

January 25<sup>th</sup> is a very special day not only for us Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres but for Paulinian faculty, staff, personnel, and students in all St. Paul Schools and the medical practitioners, staff, and pastoral workers in all our health care and pastoral establishments all over the world. It is a special day for all of us because today we celebrate the turning point in the life of our common father and patron, St. Paul. We celebrate that moment in St. Paul’s life when his transformation from being a violent persecutor of Christians to being an ardent Apostle of Christ steered him to dedicate his whole life to God with full courage and zeal. Is it not a great privilege to be one in celebration with all the SPC Sisters and all Paulinians in 40 countries spread out in the six continents of the world? Happy Feast Day to all of us! (Turn to the person to your right and to your left and say, “Happy Feast Day!”)



Our celebration is made even more special because this year, 2017, we celebrate the 105<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our institution, St. Paul University Manila. Right here in Malate, on what used to be a swampy piece of land 105 years ago, now stands tall an autonomous, institutionally accredited university, a Center of Excellence in Music, a Center of Development in Nursing, a PAASCU accredited educational institution continually responding to the challenge to be a “Christ-centered educational institution committed to forming persons into becoming integrated, competent, and compassionate in the service of the Church and society.” Throughout 105 long years, St. Paul University Manila has continued to be a recipient of God’s bounty, a HOME to some 2,304 current Paulinians, and a LOVING CRADLE to countless Paulinian alumni who have sustained the legacy of service to the community, the country, and the Church.

We have aptly chosen our theme for both our St. Paul University Week Celebration and our year-long anniversary celebration: **“Strengthening Communion of Communities at 105.”** Communion means a close relationship with someone or something. The Oxford dictionary defines COMMUNION as a sharing or exchanging of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level. The Greek term for COMMUNION is KOINONIA, which means sharing, participation, a gift jointly contributed, a collection, a contribution. It identifies the idealized state of fellowship and unity that should exist within the Christian Church, the Body of Christ.

Various sources say that the spiritual meaning of KOINONIA implies three things (Source: WIKIPEDIA):

1. Koinonia implies the spirit of generous **SHARING** or the act of giving as contrasted with selfish getting. When *koinonia* is present, the spirit of sharing and giving becomes tangible. In most contexts, generosity is not an abstract ideal, but a demonstrable action resulting in a tangible and realistic expression of giving.

2. *Koinonia* also implies a common ground by which the two parties are joined together, creating an aligned **RELATIONSHIP**, such as a "fellowship" or "partnership."
3. *Koinonia* implies **COMMUNITY**. The idea of community denotes a "common unity" of purpose and interests. By engaging in this united relationship, a new level of consciousness and conscience emerges that spurs the group to higher order thinking and action, thus empowering and encouraging its members to exist in a mutually beneficial relationship. Thus community and family become closely intertwined, because aiming at a common unity strives to overcome brokenness, divisiveness, and ultimately gaining wholeness with each of the members, with their environment, and with their God.

I would like to mention in a special way today our SERVICE AWARDEES. With congratulations and gratitude for having lovingly dedicated the best of their years to St. Paul University, I believe that their loyalty to the school was motivated not only by a spirit of SERVICE (DIAKONIA) but by an authentic experience of COMMUNION (KOINONIA) in this academic community.

May our celebration of our 105<sup>th</sup> anniversary year spur us on to strengthen even more our spirit of sharing, our relationships with one another, and our sense of community.

Aware that 2017 has been declared by the Philippine Local Church as the Year of the Parish as Communion of Communities, let our sense of communion go beyond the walls of our institution, extending our spirit of KOINONIA to our Parish, to our community, to our society, and to the world.

At about the same time today, our Provincial Superior, Sr. Lilia Thérèse Tolentino, SPC, immediate past president of St. Paul University Manila, the Provincial Council, and the other Sisters in the Provincial House launch our celebration of 290 years of *mission ad gentes* of the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres (as you must have heard at mass earlier). Do you realize that this university would not be here today if, 290 years ago, there were no Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres who were brave enough to heed the Lord's call to go out as missionaries? If the SPC Sisters did not dare to go out of France, we would not be here in Asia, nor in North or South America; we would not be in Africa, nor in Australia, nor in other parts of Europe outside France. But thanks to the first four missionary Sisters who zealously dared to go out of their comfort zones. Overwhelmed by the love of Christ, they sowed the seed of internationality, concretely defining the international and missionary character of our Congregation... Together with all the SPC Sisters here and abroad, we wish to reaffirm anew that our Congregation has been missionary for 290 years. *With gratitude*, we remember in a special way our Sisters ... who have volunteered to serve in *mission ad gentes*. They have shown that 'Jesus Christ and His Gospel transcend all cultures.'

Such are the countless reasons for us to rejoice today. Together as one Paulinian Family and in solidarity with all the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres and all Paulinians all over the world, we thank God for His boundless love and His abundant graces. May we, individually and as one community, be inspired even more to give ourselves to God for the good of the Church and in the service of our community, our country, and the world.

Thank you and good morning!