

Paul VI to the School Missionaries after the death of their Foundress

“Liberators of souls”

Wednesday, September 1st, 1976

Dearest daughters, it is indeed not an imaginary effort nor an illusion to consider present here she who is absent. My mind is flooded with all memories and all occasions in which I myself have been fortunate to meet her, listen to her and read through the intentions within her heart.

What great love she cherished for Christ, for Truth, for God, for Church, and for you! Each one of you can say, as the Apostle says about Jesus, *Dilexit nos!* (Gal 2:20), she loved us.

And you may know that this meeting, though short – I don't say conventional yet restricted to forms imposed by external conditions – is willed to be a cordial one from our part.

As daughters you come and as daughters we receive you; you come to bring us, I would say, the inheritance of which you are bearers and holders; and I willingly accept it, offer it to the Lord that He may consecrate it and make it his own, render it fruitful and rich and give you the assurance of having discovered your choice, having found the right way, followed by great models like Saint Catherine and others who willed to serve the kingdom of God and give to the Church its modern expression.

At the end of public meeting we willed to have this short meeting reservedly for you, dearest daughters of the Union of St. Catherine of Siena of School Missionaries, not only in response to the desire expressed by you of late but also to tell you with what esteem and trust we look at your religious educational apostolate in remembrance – sweet yet humanly speaking bitter remembrance – of your meritorious Foundress Mother Luigia Tincani who is well known to us as well.

You have come together to celebrate General Chapter and we know that these days of intense commitments and proposals are of great importance for the life of the Institute.

You have already fulfilled the act of electing the new Superior General and this visit is much more welcoming as it offers us the opportunity to extend her personally our wishes for the effective, wise and challenging performance of the task she has been called to.

Nevertheless permit our thoughts return once again to that figure: she who before all willed and animated your Union; and I got the chance to see from the outset the outline of an apostolate conceived and implemented in a modern way.

Thus promises and memories merged together and given credence to a paternal exhortation which we now address to you all, rather to each one of you. Let us take advantage of this moment of opening to insinuate us into your soul and in your intentions, to announce to you this our compliance to your vocation and our blessing and encouragement, and to strengthen the certainty over that which you have chosen and promised. The Pope knows you, follows you, supports you and blesses you.

In fact, the ideal that was dreamed firstly and later realized boldly by the late Mother Tincani is not exhausted; on the contrary, as we see the growing needs of School and the multiplicity of ferments – not always and not all positive – emerging in it, we understand all the more urgent a qualified Catholic presence within such a delicate sphere.

Therefore your work cannot be considered a simple continuation of what has been done in the past nor is it an infidelity to continue on a path almost away from the starting point. No! It is in the logic of things and in the will of God: who founded it gave a push, not to stop and say like the Apostles at the station of Transfiguration «how good it is to be here», instead to go forward, perhaps to follow the Lord to a different station, that is Calvary.

Your work hence cannot be considered just a continuation of what was done in the past; instead, in view of the difficulties, it must acquire further clearer growth and development and result in original and brilliant initiatives, inspired by the canons of Christian pedagogy and above all by the contents of the evangelical doctrine.

You would perhaps, rather without a perhaps, need no exhortation on this point; but since the hour we live by affects your teaching profession as well and is so disturbing and so stormy for schools that doubts can arise in you too such as: «we have chosen a blind alley, a path with no possibility of performing our action, and we are unable to imprint a sign of our faith, our love and our ideal in the souls of our students!» No, do not let yourselves be won over by such doubts if you come across these and feel tempted this way. Do not let yourselves overcome by distrust perhaps saying: it is a path with no way out, a lane with no exit. No! why?! first of all because of the needs of the School itself.

You can see in the heart of youth the need of a certainty, of a word of love and light. They, the young ones, are also deserving candidates to listen to something of the voice of Jesus which you may let shine through your example if not by your word. Know that the new generations are not insensitive to this prompting of which you made your vocation and profession – that is, of the school.

If nothing else, appeal to your name: Missionaries! What does “Missionary” mean?

It means first of all to go to places other than yours, finding oneself in conditions that seem impossible, where it seems almost absurd to go to preach, where there is hardly any preparation and the slightest desire to listen to. You are Missionaries: and hence face this paradoxical and ungrateful situation too; but you are “School Missionaries”, therefore of something greater and more beautiful. Yes, what is more beautiful than forming souls and forming the souls of youth?

Today we talk about liberation. And you, School Missionaries, are precisely liberators of souls and give to souls the possibility of forming themselves, that is to enrich themselves, to bring to light the gifts and talents the Lord has bestowed on each of them. So face courageously and confidently your vocation and profession. Be the School Missionaries, as the venerable and dear Mother Tincani taught you and will teach anyone who will have the responsibility to enlighten your steps and even the very conscience of your vocation: «This is my duty: the School!».

Yes, speak to the souls about human sciences yet say it with stress that reveals a higher truth and a higher destiny. Besides the various subjects that are entrusted to your competence, you have to teach the science of life: why we live, how we live, where have we placed our hopes and the points orienting towards our existence. And you can do this even by keeping silent: it is enough to profess well what you are.

I would like to recommend you one thing, though it is superfluous here: be good, be good! Support your profession with the apology of your expertise and with simplicity. Give what you can, do well and do with love, replenishing yourself constantly with prayer and meditation on the rich and inexhaustible doctrine of St. Thomas and St. Catherine, of which you are disciples.

And let apostolic blessing be your comfort in your daily work. We really bless you with a special intention to strengthen in you your vocation, to solidify your Union, your new foundation, and to make it capable of overcoming difficulties, tiredness and wear of time, and obstacles placed by the society also before good cultural initiatives, so rich and so fruitful.

Be of courage! Formula is good, principles are good, graces of the Lord – which you certainly obtain with your prayer and your dedication – are excellent. Know that our Apostolic Blessing truly assists you always.