

Sharing Pauline's Vision



An Extra-ordinarily Ordinary Woman

Text by
Sr. M. Judith Moran, SCC

Mother Pauline's life was a simple, ordinary life lived extraordinarily well. As a young girl she enjoyed playing games with her younger brothers, most of the time winning the capture of their imaginary fort. She was unhappy with her low marks in penmanship on her report card. In later years she wrote to her Sisters: "Don't be embarrassed about penmanship. It need not be well written, I look only at the heart that is speaking through the letter, nothing else." Pauline followed her own advice in her letters—3500 of which are still in the archives. She did not organize her thoughts and so had various topics in the same paragraph. Poor penmanship was a trait of hers all of her life.

Pauline's kind spirit already showed itself in her youth. When she was thirteen she recorded the money spent from her allowance: \$1.00 to the Church, \$2 to a poor child for a dress, and \$3.00 to a widow for food. She enjoyed her trips to her Grandmother's house, loved dancing and horseback riding. At 17, Pauline fell in love with a young man. After prayer, however, she decided that God was calling her to religious life.

Pauline did not have a beautiful face, but the sister of Professor Schlueter, a personal friend, said that though her face was not beautiful it gave a highly favorable impression; her eyes showed friendliness, cheerfulness, a childlike spirit and boundless good will.

Mother Pauline had a great love for the Holy Eucharist, but she had no visions or extraordinary spiritual experiences. She told her Sisters that they

should have a loving relationship with God: talk with Him, share their life, ask the Lord's advice. She admonished them: "Don't pray, Love." She advised them to hold hands with the Lord as lovers do and enjoy being with the Lord. This kind of relationship was nourished by daily Holy Mass and by serving Christ in the sick poor. When Pauline saw a need, she tried to help. She established a Day Care Center for the children of poor working mothers; she formed a group of young ladies to care for the sick in their homes and kept many a night vigil with the dying; she offered retreats for the lay teachers in her schools. When two blind children were brought to her Day Care Center, she took them in and immediately studied how she could educate the blind.

As with all humankind, Pauline had her faults also. She was at times very forceful with her brothers when discussing her spending. They felt she was spending all of her inheritance on the poor and the community; she felt otherwise. She was at times too direct in speaking with her Sisters. She often asked one of her assistants to discuss a situation with the persons involved as she

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felt it would then be done in a gentler manner. She persevered, however, in what she felt was right, reminding the bishops that they should not interfere with the interior workings of the Congregation. She had a tough love, correcting her Sisters when necessary. Once in South America she felt she had been too severe with a Sister so she made a return trip to let her know she still was loved.

Mother Pauline ended her life as she had lived it, in charity, humility and simplicity. She visited all her Sisters in North

and South America and Europe. She gave a last conference to the Sisters and welcomed a sick Sister to the Motherhouse though she herself was ill. Finally realizing her end was near, she returned to her sick bed and asked to have all the candles lit so that the Lord would meet her in light. She surrendered her life into the hands of her God as her last supreme act of love. One of the last pieces of advice that she gave her Sisters was: "If true humility, love and a due fervor in prayer reigns then we might expect God's blessing."

Mother Pauline was indeed an extraordinarily ordinary woman. She lived by the simple thought that ***Love never counts, only Love counts.*** †

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Networking

Text by
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There is much written today about “networking” with various groups. Pauline was already quite good at this as early as 1839. Wherever there was a need, especially for the poor, Pauline worked to find a way to help.

In 1839 Pauline noticed that the poor of Paderborn needed medical help. Therefore, she hung posters in the churches and synagogues asking for ladies to volunteer to go to and care for the sick poor in their homes. She welcomed volunteers from all faiths or no faith. The wife of the Jewish Rabbi joined the group. Twenty-nine joined what Pauline called “Active Members of the Association Caring for the Sick Poor in Their Homes”. She also recruited households that would take turns in delivering meals to the patients. Doctors were assigned to give free medical help. Pauline did not keep the role of director of the group, but she did take the role of secretary since she felt she would be freer in that capacity to help serve the poor.

Before long the government of the city had a problem with Pauline’s association since the city had a group called “Public Commission for the Care of the Poor.” Pauline had no problem. She suggested that her ladies become an auxiliary to the established government group and all worked out well.

Pauline also enjoyed the discussion groups sponsored by Professor Christopher Schlueter and his sister Theresa. Members from various religious denominations discussed, heatedly and intensely, social and religious ideas of the day. Professor Schlueter

spoke of Pauline as a person of inspiring presence, life and the power of the Holy Spirit. Her thoughts were vivid and strong. What she was — not what she said or did — struck him.

The year after their Father’s death Pauline and her sister, Bertha, and brother Herman took a final vacation trip together. Pauline was interested in seeing large institutions and how they were managed. Herman and Bertha went to the theater or opera. Herman said that Pauline “had to go to a charitable institution to see the latest method of drying laundry”.

In 1845 Pauline began networking with the provincial school for the blind. Pauline was invited to join the Protestant school in Soest. She had no problem with working with mixed religions but she could not teach the Protestant faith. Eventually there were two branches of the school: one Protestant and one Catholic. Pauline continued to network with the Protestant section of the Blind Institute. She had to work with President von Bodelschwingh, a man not always easy to please. However, he said of Mother Pauline: “She had a loyalty, faithfulness and charity that could surmount human faults in those with whom she had built a relationship whether in business or otherwise.”

When the care for the blind could not be assumed by a religious congregation, Pauline eventually founded the Sisters of Christian Charity. By the time this happened, Pauline had visited many religious

communities, had read many of the constitutions of other religious congregations and had seen how these groups conducted religious life. All of this helped her in the formation of the rule for her new community.

There are many more ways in which Mother Pauline worked together with other groups to further

the mission of God. She established retreats for lay teachers, tried to get Brothers to work with the boys in the orphanage, wrote innumerable letters for donations to the Queen, Bishops, Cardinals, and influential priests. She sent Sisters to help in the military hospital where there was a need.

Mother Pauline was always ready to help by working together with others. Her motivation was always the glory of God and the welfare of others. She wrote: “All that entails work and suffering is for me; all that is useful is for my neighbor; all that elicits praise is for God.” †

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