

## Presentation of the theme

The Sisters of the General Government, together with the Sisters of the Preparatory Commission of the 7th General Chapter, at the beginning of our work, ran through the journey of the past years starting from the objective of the 6GC which asked us to train ourselves in spiritual discernment, in the relationship with Jesus Good Shepherd and gazing with His eyes the complexities of our time in the hope of qualifying our mission, our shepherding.

In the light of the Word of God, in particular of some texts which are familiar to us, we have meditated on the suggestions sent by the Circumscriptions for the definition of the theme of the next General Chapter. In prayer, it seemed that the suggestions converged on the necessity to always give more quality to our pastoral mission in the Church.

In defining the theme and the itinerary of preparation, we also placed ourselves in listening to Fr. Alberione and to the cry that rises from the heart of humanity of this time and together re-read the pastoral ministry of the Church in the different continents through the post-synodal exhortations.

Considering that the General Chapter is a particular event of the Spirit to conjugate Charism with history, it seems to us that focusing on the element of the “care of souls” and re-reading it in the light of the actual socio-ecclesial context, can be the path that the Spirit is indicating to us precisely in this year of the beatification of our Founder.

For this, we have expressed the “care of souls” with the theme: *leading to the springs of Life: to live and to give Jesus Good Shepherd to humanity of today*, considering the Unitary Project of the Pauline Family. Besides, we see it necessary to stress that the “care of souls” be lived first of all among us, within our religious communities and at the same time shared in the communion of the Church in collaboration with pastors and laity.

We ask Mary, Mother of the Good Shepherd to awaken in us the desire to quench our thirst in the springs of Life in order to lead others.

## Explanation of the theme

### LEADING TO THE SPRINGS OF LIFE:

To live and to give Jesus Good Shepherd to humanity of today.

### The “*care of souls*” lived among us and shared in the Church

**LEADING:** a pastoral verb that expresses both “care of souls” towards the individual persons and “communion” as the fruit of converging everyone towards the source of Life. The act of leading also expresses the beauty of a “calling” that can appeal to young women today.

**TO THE SPRINGS OF LIFE:** a dynamic expression taken from the Book of Revelation 7:17 that indicates the goal to which we desire to lead the humanity of today, responding to its yearning for God, to its search for meaning in life.

**SPRINGS:** that which is the origin of everything: the Holy Trinity, towards whom Jesus the Shepherd will lead everyone, to the fullness of communion.

**LIFE** is that which Jesus Good Shepherd gives to us and we are called to transmit in the principal areas of the “care of souls”:

- formation in order to lead to maturation of faith
- charity as fruit
- liturgy as celebration of life
- personal accompaniment as one of the more adequate ecclesial mediation to deal with the sense of existential loss of meaning

**To live and to give Jesus Good Shepherd to humanity of today** expresses our specific characteristic as Pastorelle in the Unitary Project of the Pauline Family.

**To live Jesus Good Shepherd** is to be rooted in Him, it is to allow ourselves to be led by Him through spiritual discernment, so as to learn to lead others.

**and to give Jesus Good Shepherd:** He is TRUTH for anyone seeking a foundation; WAY for anyone seeking direction; LIFE for anyone who lies in the shadow of death.

**to humanity** refers to the addressees of our mission. It seems a concept very close to our pastoral sensibilities that privileges the direct interpersonal relationship rather than that of a mediated relationship

**of today:** expresses the attention towards the concrete, existential situation of our contemporaries, but also the today of God who is at work in our history

### **The “care of souls” lived among us**

Reminding ourselves of the reflection that took place during the First Enlarged Council: *“We accompany each other reciprocally in the following of Jesus Good Shepherd”* (July 2001), we believe that the taking care of our Sisters with whom we are called to live in daily life, may be the verification of the authenticity of our taking care of others.

### **and shared in the Church**

The grace of the “care of souls” belongs to the Church as such, and it is entrusted primarily to the pastors and to us as a charismatic gift. It is only in the spirit of communion that we can share the “care of souls” with the pastors and with those who collaborate in the building up of the Christian community.

To take care of the life of the people in their journey towards God, is not exhausted for us Pastorelle, within the visible boundaries of the sheepfold of Christ, but it extends to everybody, in the spirit of our Founder. This also highlights the ecumenical dimension of our Charism.

*“And there are other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and this I have to lead as well. They too will listen to my voice, and there will be only one flock, and one shepherd”* (Jn 10:16).

*Sr Giuseppina and Sisters of the General council  
and of the Preparatory Commission*

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First Feast of Blessed James Alberione