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## Revive the gift that is in you

Today, we wish to reflect with you on an aspect that marks your identity as FMA Past Pupils. We do this by pausing on the words Pope Paul VI addressed to you in the celebration of the Centenary of the FMA Institute on 16 August 1972, at Castelgandolfo. On that occasion, the Pope said to the Past Pupils, *“You have a gift, a grace of God that you must preserve and maintain.”*

It regards a gift received, given to each of you simply because you arrived, all of you without distinction, in an FMA House by God’s design. The certainty of this Grace leads us to give you an invitation like St. Paul gave to his disciple Timothy, **“Revive the gift that is in you.”**

We pause together on the Pope’s words and analyze his invitation in three moments:

### 1. Be aware of the gift received

The first step is that of **being aware** that a gift has been received, something beautiful, good, precious, great. Pope Paul helps us to understand this better.

He said, *“You should be proud of this school for this formation. You modeled your souls on the example of the Blessed Virgin, preparing for life in an atmosphere of seriousness, serenity, joy. Now you reap the fruits and you will realize, with growing inner joy, the good received.”*

It would be enough to keep silence a while and look back to recognize that it is really like this. It would be wonderful to listen to the people here present to be amazed. It would confirm this reality in a thousand ways. Ponder the first wonder, now, in the silence that dwells in you (silence pause).

So many memories and how much gratitude for the care received, for the accompaniment in growth experienced, for the help found. Sr. Piera Cavaglià writes, *“To recognize means to be aware of the gift received. Thus, it is the consequence of an attitude of attention, reflection, recovery of an experience to discover how many gifts are interwoven in it. Giving thanks is the memory of the heart that does not forget what it has received. From here comes the expression of gratitude that 'rises from the heart' and makes you feel affection for those who have given.”*

The gift received has a name, *Mornese Salesian Charism*. It is a gift that has been given, that is entrusted to us, and that today, is in your hands.

## 2. A gift to preserve

Pope Paul VI says that the gift is "*A grace to be preserved*". After we realize that we have such a precious gift within us, we do not want to lose it; on the contrary, we work hard to protect it, to guard it, preserve it, safeguard it, defend it. It is a commitment of joyful care made of attention, consideration, deepening, affection, love, and dedication. A maternal attitude makes you resilient and creative, so that the gift that is in you may grow and bear fruit, be generative.

## 3. A gift to maintain and to give

Pope Francis says: "*A gift cannot be bought, exchanged or sold: it is received and given as a gift.*" The gift, the charism, is maintained if it develops and deepens; if it is incarnated in time and space; if it propagates thanks to the joyful gratitude with which each one of you and your Federations welcome it, spread it, make it visible.

St. Paul reminds us that the **gift must be revived**. The verb he uses is interesting, to revive, that is '*to give life to a fire*'. The fire is rekindled, cheered, enlivened, revived. The gift is a fire that does not nourish itself. It dies if it is not kept alive; it goes out if the ashes cover it. If everything remains as it is, the gift vanishes.

Matthew invites us, "Freely you have received, freely give" (Mt 10:8). Each one of you is called to say, especially with your life, "I have received freely and therefore I must give freely." You are invited to recognize the gratuitousness that has reached you and respond with the gratuitousness to which life must now open. The gift of being an FMA Past Pupil is called to expand, to be made known, so that many others may receive it and enjoy it.

Some questions: What have you done with the gift received? Is it hidden? Did your family, your friends, your colleagues receive it? How does it spread in your neighborhood, in your work?

Feel as your own again today, the wish that Paul VI himself had addressed to you in Castelgandolfo:

*"We pray that this commitment, revived in fraternal encounters ... will always endure in you with the enthusiasm of the first years, although matured from daily experience. We sincerely hope that in the various walks of life which have opened to you through the mysterious and benevolent hand of Providence, that in your family, in your profession, in your work, you will strive to always remain faithful to Christian ideals, and to make yourselves apostles, convinced and driving forces for the building of a more just and healthier world, according to the instructions entrusted by the Council to the laity." (Paul VI, Castelgandolfo 16-081972).*

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