

CHANGE OF HEART

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We have just begun the liturgical season of Lent. A time when the Church invites us to thank God for the salvation offered to us by the death and resurrection of Jesus. A time when we are invited to participate in the Passover of the Lord with a purified and renewed heart through penance, fasting, prayer, forgiveness, reconciliation with God and with others. A time to experience a personal and communal journey of conversion. Let us prepare to experience this Lent as “an opportunity” that the Lord gives us, for spiritual renewal keeping in mind his love and grace.

**A personal and
communal journey
of conversion**

The theme of this letter “*change of heart*” is fully in line with the Lenten experience, but it is also closely linked to the process we are experiencing as Congregation. If we look at the Decisions of the 35th General Chapter, we can conclude that they were marked by an important and significant experience of “*conversion*”; we can say that our General Chapter began with a direction and a determined purpose, but after a few days, the Spirit took us along another road and we let ourselves be led by him. If this experience of “*conversion*” was of primary importance in “Chapter decisions” we must continue to give it the same importance along the road we must travel to carry out such decisions.

The whole process that we are experiencing in the Congregation and into which we are increasingly going deeper, invites us to a true “*change of heart*”, it invites us to develop and cultivate a new way of thinking, of caring and living, having God’s will as the only rule. It is a call to open ourselves up to the dynamism of Grace and of allowing ourselves to be recreated by it. The face of the Congregation will be new to the extent that the heart of each sister is renewed according to the Heart of God. A heart purified by the irrigation of human, evangelical and charismatic values that will reflect the new face of the congregation.

This “*change of heart*” requires a complete break from our attitudes that have not been evangelized: personal interests, addictions, deceit, justifications, resistances, wanting to be right in everything, self-sufficiency, dishonesty with ourselves, telling ourselves only some truths, lack of humility to let ourselves be challenged by others ... I could go on, but each one knows well “where it hurts”. Breaking these dynamics is not easy, we need to ask the Lord to renew us and to remake us from within. Conversion is a long and difficult journey which is not without trials and demands. Conversion is primarily a free gift from God and it comes in a personal encounter with the Lord, in listening to his word when we confront our life with the way of being and acting of Jesus.

Conversion is a free gift from God and it comes in a personal encounter with the Lord

Our Constitutions expresses very well the journey of “change of heart” when it say: “*We make our own the attitudes, options and tasks that led Jesus to the point of having his Heart transpierced on the Cross*” (Const # 3). We seek to make ours the thoughts, feelings and attitudes of Jesus, we want Jesus to be the center of our life, of our decisions and choices. We long to make our own the experience of St. Paul: “*I live, not I, but Christ who lives in me*” (Gal 2:20).

To make a journey of conversion from these categories is to live a radical transformation, a change of the whole person: the mindset, the internal logic, the scale of values, feelings and attitudes. It is actually an ongoing molding with the Heart of Jesus.

Feelings and attitudes that generate life are not always developed within our “*heart*”, it is often half sick, weak, tired and saturated, enduring bitterness, envy, prolonged sorrows, unhealed wounds, discouragement, despair ... But the Lord who knows us comes to meet us and says. “*I stand at the door and knock...*” (Ap. 3, 20). He knocks on the door of our hearts, he wants to enter, but without force, he wants an encounter that is accepted in love and freedom. The Lord wants and seeks our inner transformation, “*I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. I will remove the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh*” (Ezek. 11: 19). The road we are traveling along as a Congregation asks us to be women “with a new heart, a heart of flesh”, a heart transformed by the Word and the love of the Lord.

Over these months we all have directed our attention to the depths of our SS.CC. being and doing, strengthening and revitalizing our evangelical and charismatic roots, roots upon which we will continue to build the road Congregation along which we are traveling, but this would be very fragile if it is not accompanied by a deep, “conversion” which will help us discover new calls that the Lord is asking of us today, that places us in different situations, that allows us to dream of other new ways to present the merciful love of God in the midst of our people.

Strip ourselves of whatever prevents us from being what God dreams

In a few weeks we will begin a new phase in the “roadmap” drawn up for this year: a “revision of apostolic works and presences”. Looking through the eyes of God at our apostolic works and presences, we find that there are many that speak of service, giving, sacrifice..., love that is given; but we cannot stay there, we are asked to go a step further, we are asked for the courage to strip ourselves of whatever prevents us from being what God dreams of for our Congregation today; we need passion to venture down new paths, new forms, new structures wherever the Lord wants to take us. We will be called to go out again, maybe in another direction, in conclusion we will be called again and again to a “change of heart”.

At times like these, maybe we will discover that we are not as free as we thought, perhaps rather we prefer not to see reality, not to see the amount of things that block our hearts and take away our freedom. Perhaps we will discover that there are situations that paralyze us, that produce fear and insecurity, “if we allow this, what are we left with? How are we?”... It is often said that the people who are the most difficult to convert are good people, because many reasons can be found to justify what we are doing and experiencing. As we can see, without a conversion process deeply rooted in the Heart of God, we cannot go far in our good wishes and search for the “new face” of the Congregation.

Let us ask Mary to teach us to live in an attitude of ongoing conversion, opening ourselves up as porous clay to the transforming action of the Spirit.