

## ***THE FIAT OF MARY***



We are coming to the end of a month marked by many meaningful signs for us. A month to be thankful, to rejoice and to commit ourselves. A month to meet with the ultimate expression of the merciful love of God who comes to stay with us. A month to be thankful for our congregation, for its birth. A month to acknowledge and to celebrate the great mercy of God at the beginning “of the Jubilee Year of Mercy”. In this context of “abundant grace”, we are also nearing the end of the final stage of the process of the Congregation which we have been experiencing; which will end at the same time as the beginning of a new stage.

In this beautiful season of Advent which we are about to conclude, the Church has given us Mary as a teacher and traveling companion of faith. Mary is “full of grace” with her “YES” without reservations or conditions, she welcomed the saving plan of God. A “YES” that it is not based on human certainties, but only on her absolute trust in God. This absolute trust in God

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led her to become the “reed” of God, “reed through which eternal love will be channelled and given to mankind” (Caryll Houselander).

In the light of all this, we could say that there is a parallel between the liturgical time we are experiencing and the present moment as a Congregation. We took some time “welcoming and preparing” a “New Face”, a new reconfiguration; We have experienced a long time of prayer, reflection, sharing, work ... and we are prepared to see the birth of something new, responsive to the will of God for our Congregation today, to “welcome life that comes from Him, to multiply it and to offer it to everyone” (35<sup>th</sup> General Chapter).

The “yes” we said at the last General Chapter, will need to be confirmed at the next Council of Congregation. God does not want to act alone, even though he can do so; He prefers to rely on human collaboration. Just as God wanted to rely on Mary to save us, so he wants to rely on us to continue his work. The “yes” of God to our Congregation, must be followed by our own “yes”. As God needed to hear Mary’s “*let it be done to me according to your word*” (Lk 1: 38), he also needs a sincere and committed “Thy will be done in us” to flow from our hearts.

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Mary and her “fiat” inspire our SS.CC. lives, especially at this time of preparation for the next Council of the Congregation, to prepare our hearts and our minds, and to search for what the Lord is asking of us today. Mary's fiat is progressive, beginning with the Annunciation in Nazareth, without really knowing where it will end. It is a Fiat that passes through the cross at Golgotha; but it does not stop there, her faith and hope go further, culminating in the Resurrection and Pentecost. It is a Fiat that is strengthened to the degree that it is accepted, assumed and experienced. It is a Fiat accompanied and sustained by the Word; Mary hears the Word, welcomes it, makes it her own and keeps it in her heart. This Word accepted and assumed becomes life and life in abundance.

The “yes” of Mary is not without doubts and questions. Yes, Mary asked a lot of questions and that is good, because it helped her to be more aware of what the Lord was asking. However, many questions had no answer, but that did not stop her, nor paralyze her, nor prevent her from fully trusting in God.

We are also on this road where not everything is light, where we are invited to plunge into uncharted waters, to walk through the darkness, abandoning our security, leaving what we have learned to enter into something new, to a life of risk and abandonment. A path where we will surely have many questions: “What form will the New Face” of the Congregation take? How will this whole process that we are experiencing end? How will it affect the sisters, communities, countries...? What will it require of me? What will my answer be? Questions that still remain unanswered. But like Mary we will not allow the lack of answers to paralyze us, to stop us on the road; but rather, to be aware of the tension between what we have and know, and what we can build together. Yes, the extent that we give will be the measure of what we receive. The Lord invites us to go further, to look up and find out what He wants to reveal.

To see the future, we have to start from where we are, to leave the tent “*he brought him outside and said: Look up at the sky and count the stars... And he said, Your descendants will be like that*” (Gen 15. 5). We must learn to look under the open skies, only under divine dependency. We need the faith of Abraham to go out and to be on our way. We need to let ourselves be accompanied and guided by Mary so that like her we can say “yes to life”, and allow the Spirit do his Work in the Congregation with and through us. The “New Face” of the Congregation is the duty of each and every one of us; each one is the author of a piece of this new face, a fragment whose positive or negative meaning impacts on the entire body of the Congregation.

The Fiat of Mary is strongly supported by its constancy and fidelity. From her “YES”, she agrees to the call that she has received and to the answer she has given; adapting her life to the will of God. Mary is faithful and consistent to the end, to the cross, to the resurrection, to Pentecost. When everyone thought it was over with the death of Jesus, she continued to believe, making it the light of hope that never goes out.

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It is less difficult to be consistent when something or someone does not affect us much, does not question us, not asking us to leave where we are... But it is much harder to be consistent when difficulties arise, when one does not see clearly, when our heart is invaded by the doubts, uncertainty, fear... So it will do us much good to continually allow ourselves to be enlightened by the Fiat of Mary. Her faithfulness is woven by poverty, trust, availability, like ours. Only when we

understand and accept our limits, can we abandon ourselves to God who is the only answer to all our questions, doubts and fears, *“because for him nothing is impossible”* (Lk 1: 37), for Him everything is possible.

The fiat of Mary was said once and for all, but it needs to be renewed every day, because every day we need to perceive God's Will, a will that is sometimes puzzling, painful, incomprehensible... but always full of love and mercy. We like Mary, are called to pronounce again and again our “yes” to the Lord and to His plan of love for our Congregation. And to ask him that we may feel the security of abandoning ourselves to his Providence and Mercy.

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Within a few weeks we will say “yes” to God through the conclusions and decisions that we reach in the Council of Congregation. A “yes” marked by our weaknesses, limitations... But at the same time and above all a “yes” founded on the certainty of the love and faithfulness of God who wants to put his tent in our communities and in our Congregation. A “yes” where the Word and the faithfulness of the Lord is the only power that feeds, guides and supports us along the way. *“My words will not pass away”* (Mark 13: 31).

Let us put our eyes on Mary and learn from her to fully trust in the Lord, to rely on him. Learn from her attitude as a believing woman and disciple; as she assumed the consequences of her “yes”. Let us ask her to teach us to keep within our hearts the things we do not understand, but that we sense are part of God's plan for us and for our Congregation. Let us ask her to join us in our sincere desire to say to the Lord *“Let your will be done in us and in our Congregation your”*.

**“Happy Christmas and a Holy New Year”**