

A CHARISMATIC CONVICTION

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"The Congregation is a need of the Heart of God".

Good Mother



I am writing to you through **INFO**, with the joy and hope which this season of Advent brings us. This is an important means of communication in the Congregation. In the next six years, we will use this newsletter as a means: of communication between the General Government and the whole Congregation; for reflection and on-going Formation; to share what the Congregation is living at all levels and to share and become aware of the steps which we will be taking based on the Decisions of the last General Chapter. All of this will help us to grow in communion as a Congregation and help to inspire and accompany each other in the living of our SS.CC. vocation and mission.

“A Need for the Heart of God”, this expression from our founder has accompanied us in a very particular way for over a year, as the theme which inspired the preparation and progress of the 35th General Chapter, which took place in September of this year in Rome.

“A Need for the Heart of God”. We could ask ourselves, what kind of impact does the profound, theological and charismatic meaning of this expression have on us personally and as communities? Do we live it with conviction in the daily living out of our SS.CC. vocation and which of our daily activities confirm this? Have we asked ourselves this personally and as communities? How did the Good Mother understand it and what value and meaning did she give to it? Are we faithful to this inspiration or do we perhaps obstruct it with our mediocrity and lack of love?

It's not a question of looking for immediate answers, but of daring to allow ourselves to be questioned and giving expression to these questions arising from deep within us. As we listen silently, these questions may penetrate our hearts and our daily lives.

What does the Heart of God need us for today? How will we know? We will find the answer in Jesus, who was sent by the Father to reveal His love. When someone is sent there has to be an incarnation and for this incarnation to take place there needs to be a woman of real and authentic

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faith who is capable of answering *“I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done unto me according to your Word”* (Lk.1, 38). God became flesh; He become heart; He became love; a love capable of feeling, of suffering pain and death like other human beings, *“God so loved the world that he gave His only son so that all who believed in Him, would not be lost, but would have eternal life.”* (Jn. 3, 16). *“I have come so that you may have life and have it to the full”* (Jn 10, 10).

In the General Chapter we really experienced that we continued to be necessary for the Heart of God, but we also felt that to be able to respond to this Heart, that we needed to retune the ears of our hearts and listen to what He was asking of us today. We needed to listen to the cries of our world and the reality of our Congregation discovering its actual face today.

Perhaps we can read the actual face of the Congregation in the light of the *encounter* between Mary and Elizabeth. (Lk.1, 39-56); on the one hand we see a old woman, tired, with little energy, and on the other, a young woman, full of hope, enthusiasm and joy; both of them, however are creating life and giving life in abundance. As sisters at the Chapter, we tried to discover the revelation of God in this reality, and in this “encounter”; it is in the encounter of the “older woman with the younger one” of the Congregation, where the Spirit continues to work and create new paths and new life. It was in this experience and in this spiritual context that the insight of the important Chapter decision was born *“to give a new face to the Congregation”*.

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Throughout the Congregation we have lived, or are in the process of living the transmission of the Chapter Decisions with a lot of joy, openness and availability. Given the characteristics of these decisions, the transmission is one more step in this movement of the Spirit involving everyone, rather than just a presentation of content.

At the same time it is the first stage in the process which we as a Congregation are preparing to live. We will seek together and implement, in an attitude of faithful listening and obedience to God, the most adequate way to “encourage and enable the life of our community in Mission” docile to the work of the Spirit, remembering at every moment what God is saying to us: *“See, I set before you on this day life and good, evil and death... choose life, so that you and your descendants may live, love the Lord your God, listen to his voice and be one with him...”*(Dt 30, 15-16.19-20).

We have begun a new stage with a lot of hope, trusting totally in the power of the Spirit and sure that *“He, who began the good work, will see that it is finished”* (Phil.1,4); the challenge which is facing us is great, but God’s grace is even greater and it will be enough for us. Let us open our ears and our heart to the Word of God which tells us, *“I am the way, the truth and the life”* (Jn. 14, 6). He who has called us is faithful and he continues to awaken in us the need for conversion and radicality. He knows our limitations; for Him these aren’t obstacles. He needs us to place ourselves alongside all those who truly abandon themselves to His will.

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To live in this way is pure grace and we are called to ask for it and receive it daily. Let us pray for each other, let us strengthen the unity among us, as one single body, as a Congregation, preparing ourselves to collaborate actively in that which God desires to do in us and through us, so that with our lives we can confirm that we are a need for the Heart of God.

In this time of Advent we are invited to stand up, to have an attitude of joyful hope, to open pathways in the plains so that, like Mary we can receive the God-who-is-with-us, who *“comes to set up his tent among us”* (Jn. 1, 14), let us open our minds and hearts to the action of the Spirit so that, like Mary we can live with a faith sustained and strengthened by love. Very recently the Pope declared the Year of the Faith (11 October 2012 – 24 to November 2013) and he invited the whole Church to *“a time of special reflection and rediscovery of the faith”* (Porta Fidei, 4), because *“a profound crisis of faith is affecting many people”* (Porta Fidei, 2). We are not immune from this crisis. In the light of this call from the Pope, we must therefore enter into the deepest part of our being and in dialogue with the Lord, rediscover the paths of our own faith. This will be the best preparation for entering into the process of reorganization that the Congregation will live in the coming years.

“Blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled” (Lk. 1. 45). Mary received the Lord’s call in faith. Our Chapter decisions ask us to have a strong faith so that we can believe in the promises made by the Lord. *“Where two or more are gathered in my Name, I will be there, with them”* (Mt.18, 20), *“Do not be afraid, I am with you always, until the end of time”* (Mt. 28, 20), *“Everything is possible for he who believes”* (Mk 9, 23). This has been the experience lived in the Chapter and we must encourage this faith every day. With this common spirit; with personal, community and congregational commitment and gospel discernment we will search for the urgent and necessary steps that we need to take, so as to guide our life and mission towards the new face of the Congregation.

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At Christmas 1800, our founders consecrated themselves to love and their commitment was that of bringing this love to a world broken by hatred, division and war. They didn’t know what future awaited them, but they abandoned themselves to God, convinced that it was the “work of God”; Let us, like them, be led by the Spirit, allowing Jesus and his Word to shape our personal life and that of our

communities, so as to together, sense how to make this great dream and need of the Congregation a reality **“arrive at a new face of the Congregation”**. Will we manage it? Will it be possible? These and many more questions are surfacing and will continue to surface among us. We will search for and create the answer together, but it will depend to a large extent on how each sister and community will en flesh this *new face* in communion with the rest of the Congregation. It is only through a loving relationship with Jesus and His Word that we will be shown the path; that our hearts will be prepared and we will be available and audaciously able to risk all: only then will we be able to “lose all to gain all”.

Let us ask Mary to help us like her, to build new relationships full of meaning and love, characterised by all that gives and not just receives life; more by what is surrendered than by what is obtained.

“Let us be transformed into weavers of the Kingdom. May the conversion of our hearts and minds raise us up. May we open out our tents. May the hope and life of all of humanity and all of creation rise up out of our untiring weaving of a spirituality of communion”. (UISG, 2007)

To create and surrender life is a human and feminine condition. Our prayer can therefore be raised up in these words: *“Let us bless God with a grateful heart, because he has called us to be instruments of His Reign of love and life, of justice and peace, which so many have given their life for”*. (DA 25).