

A GENTLE CALL

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I AM STANDING AT THE DOOR AND KNOCKING



I would like to begin this letter by wishing all of you a **“Happy New Year”** and hoping too that this phrase that we repeat every year has a new and deeper meaning for us. I hope that our hearts have been overtaken with love, joy and peace and that our lives and the lives of all those with whom we share, both in our religious communities and in the communities in which we work, are joyfully renewed.

It has seemed timely to me to write this letter in the light of the two texts which I refer to below:
“Look I am standing at the door and knocking: if one of you hears me calling and opens the door, I will come in to share his meal side by side with him”. (Ap.3,20).

“Our ss.cc charism has much to say to today’s world: a divided and broken world, in need of the image of a merciful and compassionate God. Many are the places where poverty and suffering abound, where reparation and compassion are needed. Our secular society often alienated from Christ, needs to experience the love and the closeness of our “Good God”. ”. (35° General Chapter)

As you will become aware, these texts in themselves offer substantial content for our personal and communitarian reflection. Nevertheless, allow me to share with you some reflections emerging from these texts which might throw light on our Sacred Hearts vocation in our present reality and in the process which we want to live in relation to the future of our Congregation..

We have begun a new year in which God has given us a new and wonderful opportunity to enter into communion with him; God comes towards each one of us, he comes in pilgrimage to my house, he is the first to arrive and call at my door; he wants to come in and stay; he gives me the freedom to respond to him; he waits

**Look, I am standing
at the door and
knocking**

patiently; he awaits my consent. He hopes that I will take the key of my life in my own hands; the key of my desires, my fears, my plans and embracing all of them that I will dare to freely open the door to him. The response depends on me; I have the key and I have the power to open or close it, to surrender or to resist and as a result to choose life or death. (Dt. 30,15-20).

If we look at our world we find many signs that generate and bring life, but also we find many signs that lead to death. Faced with these latter signs, at times we can hear others say, or perhaps in our own interior hear these questions; Where is God? Has God hidden his face? We can find the answer to this and other similar questions in the text from Apocalypse. God is in the same place knocking at your door and mine, knocking persistently, while we continue to be distracted, by all that robs life from us each day; that keeps us so busy that we are not able to listen to God's gentle call at our door. We live in this distracted way as do all of those who are the object of our pastoral endeavours and we end up trying to partly fill, the existential vacuum that we meet; the lack of meaning, the absence of God.

God knocks at our door and awakens us from our sleep: the sleep of selfishness and individualism, lack of commitment and lack of solidarity with others and invites us to build peace, hope and communion. If we dare to open the door, we are accepting the Lord's invitation to enter into profound communion with Him, which will enable us to say like Paul: " I live, no longer I, but Christ who lives in me; "(Gal.2,20). The Lord calls us to be signs of hope and to be people who build peace today, in this concrete moment of our history; he calls us to listen and take the cries of the world to heart: the cries of the poor in a world which doesn't care; cries for community and peace in a violent world; cries from our earth which is being destroyed by human beings.

The Lord invites us to enter into a profound communion with Him

In our last General Chapter, the Lord knocked at the door of our Congregation represented by the chapter members present and by the shared experience of our life. We decided to open the door to Him and we accepted the invitation to enter into communion with him. Within this climate, we discovered that our charism has much to bring to our world today with its very real situations of division and rupture; a world in need of a God who is mercy and communion, reparation and compassion. Now we have to start out on a journey so as to be faithful to this charismatic vocation; not in an idealistic way, but based on our reality, our richness and our fragility; not on our separate strengths but together, from within our congregational body. Although we don't exactly know the journey at this moment, let us trust and let us begin walking. Let us open our eyes wide. The light which is Jesus is with us, so let ourselves be illuminated by it and by the Word and by events.

Our Charism has much to bring to our world today, a world in need of a God who is mercy and communion, reparation and compassion.

The call to begin a journey might meet barriers in us; the barrier of fear at what is new and unknown and ends up being a barrier to discovering the will of God. Perhaps, we might even find that we are the like the son who wanted to obey the father and who said yes, but who afterwards didn't do what the father asked, or like the son who immediately said no, who expressed his resistance but who ended up doing what the father asked and his NO became a YES (Mt. 21,28-31).

I think it would be good if we could remember the ways we resist, and also remember the Word and remember that Jesus also resisted. We will never be grateful enough to the Evangelists for leaving us the testimony of how Jesus resisted death, how he struggled, and sweated in Gethsemane and his prayer "if it is possible, let this chalice pass from me..." (Mt. 26,39). The movement from here to "let your will be done"(Mt.26,42), was the deepest experience that Jesus lived during his

incarnation. We need to convert our resistances into a “Yes” which will help us to become like the Son. This is a process which may last a lifetime.

We could ask ourselves, Am I ready to enter into this dynamic of “losing in order to gain” in which Jesus has risked all before us; “not my name , but yours”, “not my glory but yours”, “not my will, but yours”, “not my life, but theirs”? Am I ready to listen and accept difference, to enter into the insecurity which leads to “something new opening up”? Am I aware that resistance does not allow change or renovation and that it is an obstacle to hearing the cries of the world that we have just talked about.

In order to overcome our resistances we need to renew our trust in the Lord, to dare to go beyond our fears and to desire to “do the will of God”. Perhaps God’s greatest desire is that we become convinced that in his will “all is grace” and from the depths of our hearts we are able to say, “that your love and your grace are enough for me”.

We need to renew our trust in the Lord.

I finish by inviting you to make this prayer your own: let us begin and live this year in the company of the Lord.

BEGINNING A YEAR WITH YOU

*Beginning a year with you, Oh Lord,
Is to rise above the dawn of,
A light filled morning
And gaze in astonishment at life.*

*Beginning a year with you, Oh Lord,
Is turning up at the door of the future,
With your heart clothed in hope
And your hands open to receive the new.*

*Beginning a year with you, Oh Lord,
Is allowing the luminous ray
of our new life to burst forth,
Shaped by your love.*

*Beginning a year with you, Oh Lord,
Is drawing closer to others
And telling them: let us take hands
And let us make music of peace.*

*Beginning a year with you, Oh Lord,
Is feeling your embrace
And beginning with you to build
A civilization of love and peace.*

Amen.