

Scanning the future

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Superior General

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Dear Brothers,

Fraternal greetings to you all from Rome.

From 20-23 June, together with the General Government of the Sisters, we held our annual study session at the house of the Sisters, Slaves of the Sacred Heart, in Torricella in Sabina.

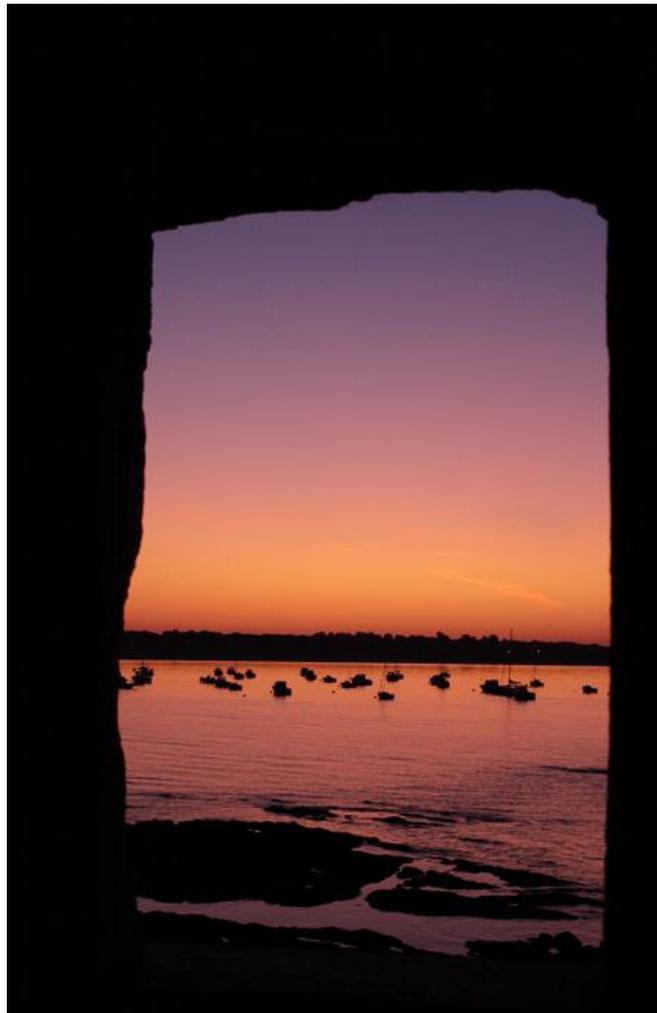
The theme of our meeting was synodality. Our desire, using synodality as a key, was to deepen our understanding of the exercise of authority and animation as General Governments.

One of the themes that featured strongly was that of leading the future with the present. In other words, to have a vision of the future and in the here and now begin to take steps towards it.

This theme also featured in the online Enlarged General Council that was held from 14-17 June. The deep desire for change, conversion of heart and pastoral conversion of our works and presences, requires us to have an inspiring vision of the future that shows us where we want to go.

We know from experience that the times we live in are fast and uncertain. Our medium-term planning requires from us a great capacity for flexibility and adaptation to the events of the present.

In this context, the readings from the cycle of the prophet Elijah resonate with great force. His time was not easy either. He experienced first-hand the drought and famine that struck the land of Israel; he encountered adversity from King Ahab and his wife Jezebel. They called him "the scourge of Israel" (1 Kgs 18:17); he was crushed by the persecution ordered against



him by Jezebel. Exhausted, the prophet asks God for death: "Enough, O LORD! Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors (1 Kgs 19:5). In spite of everything, Elijah keeps God as the "you" of his lamentation. For the same reason, he allows himself to be surprised by God who never tires of offering Israel ways for the future. This is his confession of hope. Whatever happens, and however dark the times and however adverse the circumstances, God offers himself as the future for the prophet and for his people. But that future requires to be sought, discerned and welcomed. The prophet expresses this by setting out for Mount Carmel, together with his servant, to meet with his God. There on the summit, "he stooped down to the earth, putting his face between his knees" (1 Kgs 18:42).

His experience of the God of Israel, thirsty for the future of his people, is what makes Elijah send his servant seven times to scan the sea, to see if there were any signs of the long-awaited rain. Elijah is inhabited by the same passion for the future that God has. That is why in the small cloud that emerges on the horizon, Elijah already senses not only the long awaited rain but indeed that other future that God offers to his people.

I invite you to be like Elijah's servant and to scrutinise the present time in order to discern and welcome the signs of the future that God is offering us. We can do this with everyone, with the men and women with whom we walk today. We are moved by the certainty of the faithful love of the Shepherd God who cares for the wounded and fragile sheep, who despairs of no one, of the Lord Jesus who has already reconciled in his flesh the enmities that can stubbornly separate us, and of his love poured into our hearts that makes us prayerful and vigilant. Then, brothers and sisters, we will be able to set out to welcome the future, to welcome God who comes to meet us, in the here and now.

May the God who thirsts to share his future with us be the Amen for the uncertain times we live in.

Faternally,

Alberto Toutin
Superior General