

# THE RESILIENCE

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**"When I am weak,  
then I am strong"**

**2Cor. 12, 10**



A few weeks ago the year 2013 ended, which seen through the eyes of faith, has been a year of grace and blessing because the Lord has been on our side. It is true that the suffering of our world appears to be increasing and this pains us. It does not leave us unmoved but we are certain that God continues to act, his Spirit is breathing out fresh air that is manifested in the current of solidarity of our world, in attitudes and in new situations, in the desires for change.

We ourselves are experiencing this same movement of the Spirit at personal, community and Congregational levels. Lately we have seen it act strongly in our Church through Pope Francis. His attitudes, the stance he has taken, the Apostolic Exhortation "*Evangelii Gaudium*" which was recently published, are opening a door to the future as a call to hope, and to include everyone in the Kingdom. The Pope invites us to bring the gospel of joy to everyone, to be a "*Church of movement*" to be more involved and to assist our wounded and suffering humanity, "*to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the "peripheries" in need of the light of the Gospel*" (EG 20). To carry out this plan of universal love, we need to begin with an encounter with Jesus and intimacy with Him.

**The Pope invites to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the peripheries in need of the light of the Gospel**

To discover God acting thus, to feel the powerful touches of his Spirit gives us the confidence to believe that the year that has begun will be a year blessed by the love and mercy of our Father God.

In the context of the process that we are experiencing with regard to the "*new face of Congregation*", we can say with joy and hope that the journey we will make during this year is in

the hands of God. Let Him as the Good Shepherd lead us, *“The Lord is my shepherd there is nothing I shall want..”* (Psalm 23.1). This year we will have before us new challenges and new demands that require a response. Responses that may at times difficult for us to undertake and to accept. It is not surprising that at some point this path will lead us through the wilderness, *“lead her into the desert and speak to her heart”* (Hosea 2:16) where the Lord will ask something new of us or where we will be asked to leave something for which we have deep affection.

At times like these, as vessels of clay, we may experience a deep sense of fragility and

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vulnerability. However, this experience will be a privileged opportunity to be guided and accompanied by one who can do all things, and we can say with the apostle Paul, *“when I am weak then I am strong”* (2 Cor 12:10). It is true that our being is marked by vulnerability, but the

truth is that it is marked by the One who can do all within our poverty and who tells us again and again, *“My grace is sufficient for you”*. It is in the Lord that we find the strength, courage and resilience so that together and in communion we can walk this new path of Congregation.

Today there is much talk about the **“power of resilience”** and its importance in human processes. This is understood as the human capacity to face and overcome adverse situations; to emerge stronger and with greater energy to face challenges with hope, tenacity, a positive attitude and with actions that allow us to overcome obstacles and to transform them into opportunities. At this time, and at this point of the journey that we are experiencing, it is important to discover and to recognize in each other and in our communities the power of **resilience**, that replenishes our spiritual, emotional, relational and physical needs to fill us with sufficient energy to be able to act with courage, wisdom and generosity that the demands of the journey require.

So I invite you to take the time and space to reflect on the wonderful power that hides within you, the attitude of *resilience*, and to discover within each one, the precious pearl capable of doing much good where you are.

**Replenishes our spiritual, emotional, relational and physical needs.**

What is said about resilience is extensive. Here I will just make a short presentation of this attitude and leave to each sister and community the responsibility to seek ways to continue going deeper.

## **Resilience**

Is the ability of a human being to face and overcome adverse situations, to see obstacles and difficulties as opportunities, to react positively when faced with subversive circumstances, to learn from them, to overcome them and to be positively transformed.

The ability to remain standing when storms threaten and batter us; to stand does not mean being rigid, inflexible, incapable of feeling discomfort, emotional pain.. You need to be flexible and to have vision, to recognize when the time has come to let go of the moorings and to launch into a new direction. Crises are necessary for human and spiritual growth, they are opportunities for growth and allow us to discover and to develop our abilities, many of which are unknown, ignored or hidden.

*“It supposes an encouraging approach to life without neglecting realism; such a person is aware of reality but does not remain trapped by it, but looks to the future, determines viable targets and*

*achieves them. I think the word love has more say than evil or death and the difficulty becomes a challenge, freeing us from the oppressive chains of circumstances or of so called destiny." (Rosa Ma B. )*

The dynamics of resilience is very present in the Bible. It is, basically, eminently biblical, experienced as passing from evil or a lesser good to a greater good, from night to morning, from darkness to light. It is present in both the Old and New Testaments, for example: in the history of the Jewish people in the crossing of the Red Sea and the desert; in the infiltration and exile; in the miracles of Jesus sometimes difficult to interpret, and in many other individual stories. All these moments and circumstances have this dynamic of their being "something more to life".

## **Pillars of resilience**

Ignacio Martín Morales points out and described the following:

1. **Positive self-esteem** is the base of the pillars, it is the ability to love yourself and to love others, of knowing you are of great worth and also to affirm it.
2. **Introspection** is the art and the ability to ask yourself about your actions, moods or awareness and to give an honest answer.
3. **Independence** is learning to set boundaries between yourself and the adverse environment, learning to keep emotional and physical distance without falling into isolation.
4. **Relationship** is the ability to relate, to establish bonds and intimacy with others and to balance one's need for affection with an attitude of giving to others.
5. **Initiative** is the capacity and enjoyment to make demands on oneself and to put oneself to the test in very demanding tasks, taking responsibility and exercising control over difficult and conflicting situations.
6. **Sense of humour** is the ability to find what is humorous in adversity itself, this allows us to put negative feelings away from the source of tension, playing down the problems
7. **Creativity** is the ability to create order, beauty and purpose out of chaos and disorder. The result of reflection.
8. **Critical thinking** is the ability to critically analyse the causes and responsibilities of adversity and to take appropriate measures to address them or to change them, taking responsibility for one's own actions.

## **Characteristics of resilient people (Ana Muñoz)**

Resilient people have three main characteristics: they know how to accept reality as it is; they have a deep conviction that life has meaning and they have an unwavering ability to improve.

Furthermore, they have some skills:

- They are able to identify precisely the causes of the problems to prevent their recurrence in the future. They know how to recontextualize events and maintain a hopeful vision.
- They know how to control their emotions when faced with adversity and can remain focused and unified even in crisis situations
- They know how to control their impulses and behaviour in highly stressed situations. They avoid seeing a crisis as an insurmountable problem.
- They have a realistic optimism, i.e. they think that things can be better, they have a positive view of the future and they believe they can control the course of their lives, but unencumbered by unreality or fantasy.

- They are considered competent and have confidence in their own abilities. They nourish a positive view of themselves.
- They are empathic i.e. they have a good ability to read the emotions of others and connect with them.
- They are able to search for new opportunities, challenges and relationships to discover themselves.

## How to be people who generate resilience?

The American Psychological Association presents 10 ways to build Resilience:

1. ***Establish relationships.*** It is important to establish good relationships with significant people in life, accepting help and support from people who love us and listen to us.
2. ***Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable obstacles.*** You cannot prevent the occurrence of situations that cause a lot of tension but you can change how you interpret and react to them. You have to look further and have a positive outlook.
3. ***Accept that change is part of life.*** It is possible that as a result of an adverse situation it is not possible to reach certain goals. Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help you focus on circumstances that you can alter.
4. ***Moving toward goals.*** Develop some realistic goals instead of focusing on tasks that are unreachable; ask yourself about the things you can accomplish today and that helps you to walk in the direction that you want to go.
5. ***Take decisive actions.*** In adverse situations act in the best way you can. Take decisive actions, is better than ignoring the problems and stresses and wishing they would disappear.
6. ***Seek out opportunities to discover yourself.*** Many times as a result of the struggle against adversity people can learn something new about themselves, they may feel they have grown personally and have achieved a greater and better appreciation of reality.
7. ***Cultivate a positive view of yourself.*** Develop confidence in the ability to solve problems and to trust intuitions.
8. ***Keep things in perspective.*** Even when facing painful situations try to look for the cause of the tension in a broader context and keep a longer lasting perspective. Avoid making the situation out of proportion.
9. ***Never lose hope.*** An optimistic view gives hope that good and better things can happen. Try to visualize what you want instead of worrying about what you fear.
10. ***Take care of yourself.*** Pay attention to needs and desires. Taking care of yourself helps keep the mind and body ready to deal with situations that require resilience.