

CHOOSE LIFE AND YOU WILL LIVE

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“Choose life so that you and your descendants may live ...” these words from Deuteronomy that introduce the Decisions of the 35th General Chapter, continue to resonate in our hearts with a hope and joy that is ever new; we continue to choose life and focus on it. The Council of the Congregation has just celebrated a visible testimony of this truth.

All the sisters of the Congregation joined their hearts in a common prayer that the Lord, through His Spirit, would guide, enlighten and inspire the preparation and realization of this Council of the Congregation, and afterwards all that was experienced, I can state unequivocally that the Lord has been and is on our side, is with us and wants to continue journeying with us. To experience this meeting during the week of preparation for the Feast of Pentecost, was a grace and blessing difficult to explain in words, but can be perceived within the whole experience.

From the beginning of the meeting, we asked the Spirit to stay with us, to guide our work, to enlighten our minds and to form our hearts, so that all we experienced over these days would be according to the Heart of God. From what we experienced it can be said that there was in each and all a great openness and willingness: to let the Spirit, the creative source of life to work in and through us, to co-operate submissively and to be at the service of a continuous Pentecost for each of our sisters and for those to whom they proclaim the joy of the Gospel.

With these sentiments and attitudes we began this important meeting of Congregation, but one could also tell that each sister brought her own expectations and hopes for the journey we are making, the same as those that were slowly emerging. At the end of the second day of work and reflection one could recognize some similar feelings to those of the disciples of Emmaus *“we were expecting something more constructive, as we have already said, that would be the new*

configuration of the Congregation and the new face, but we are still talking about processes that have to be experienced... ". In this environment and with these expectations within the heart of each one, the Spirit, our silent protagonist, still speaking to us through Xavier Quinza, our general consultant, who told us again and again, that in a restructuring process like ours the primacy is of the Spirit, He is the one who begins, initiates, accompanies and sets the pace; what matters is not what we can do, but the work of God in us and this is the only thing that will give consistency to the process. It is a path from fragility to trust.

It is our weakness that attracts the Spirit, not our strength nor our projects... it is in our need where He acts, gives us strength, calls us together and binds us. In this context, the invitation is to choose life from the point of view of the Magnificat, from the humble acknowledgment that all is gift and grace.

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In this atmosphere we came to the third day in which a model in stages was proposed, with its respective modes of participation, with a methodology of discernment and co-responsibility that generates processes of involvement and always facilitates listening to the Spirit. A roadmap for the reconfiguration process of the Congregation with three clearly defined phases was presented: **revitalization, review of works and presences and suggested models of reconfiguration**; three phases that will be accompanied by a preliminary phase of **motivation and socialization** of the Council of the Congregation and a **Prayer Itinerary** that will accompany the whole of this process. Finally the time line of this Roadmap, which begins in June this year and will continue until the next Council of the Congregation to be held in January 2016, was presented.

At this point the hearts of our sisters were touched and throbbed in another way and they said, now we see more clearly, there is a path that is before us; there is a process that has to be done and experienced; there is a large task in which we must all get involved, in which we have to give the best of ourselves, but always giving prominence to the Holy Spirit, because it is "*He who comes to help us in our weakness ... He himself intercedes for us with unspeakable groanings*" (Rom. 8:26)

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The Council of the Congregation Council has ended, but its impact will continue in the life and mission of each sister and community. The sisters who participated in it, have a large task and responsibility, but it cannot be carried out without the participation and involvement of each sister; we have to experience the reconfiguration process together and in communion, welcoming it with love, responsibility and a sense of belonging, which with the blessing of God and his Spirit we have to experience as a Congregation in this part of the process. We need to believe and we need to act; our life is defined by our choices, by our daily decisions and by our actions; we need to choose life each day and remain committed to it.

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To believe in this way that we are sensing and moving along is an act of hope, not of certainties; it calls into play the best of each and all of us; it is trying to create, to put the bricks needed to build something new, located in a present that has a past and dreams for a future. We will experience this stage of the process with much hope and creativity or with what is the same, with an active hope. It will not be a vision or creation from nothing, nor a repetition of the same; to act creatively implies that we seriously take charge of who we are and what we have in all its intensity, and from there to find a way that manifests the new.

We have a dream, a vision before us and at the same time we have a reality that we need to take care of. Being creative does not mean getting rid of all the more limited, fragile and worn out current reality that this presents. There is no future without a present and without a past; creativity involves remembering and co-responsible discernment.

The road we have to travel is long and perhaps difficult, but the One who has called us and has brought us together does not leave us alone, He is by our side, He is at work in us and through us despite our weaknesses and fears. In this part of the journey we should well remember the words of St. Augustine: *“ask as if everything depended on God and work as if everything depended on you”*, we are all called to give our best human and spiritual resources, to engage with creative hope throughout the whole of the process of reflection and discernment that we have to go through during this time; but we cannot forget that it is the work of God and we need to ask him with deep faith that He will carry it to fruition according to his Heart.

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I would like to finish these words with something that can resonate with much persistence, but given its importance I cannot help but bring it to mind. Let us continue to work together and in communion on everything that lies ahead, because only through working in communion and co-responsibility that will we fulfil the dream of the Congregation *“to have a new face”*. Let us always invoke the spiritual presence of our founders that they may accompany us from heaven and walk with us to continue recreating with creative hope our beautiful SS.CC. charism and spirituality.

May Mary, who knew how to embrace life, cultivate it and surrender it, be our faithful companion along the way and teach us to choose life, to cultivate it and surrender it in the everydayness of our life.

"Happy Feast of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary"