

# ALL THAT WE HAVE SEEN AND HEARD WE PROCLAIM

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Once again the word of God is the source that has inspired me to write this letter. The Word is and always will be the center of our life and our mission. *“That which was from the beginning, what we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, what we looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life ... we proclaim ... that you also may have communion with us”* (1 Jn 1: 3).

In the process we are living as a Congregation, we are invited to experience both personally and communally at this time, a journey of the “revitalization” of our SS.CC. life and mission, that allows us to create among us all the features of the “new face” of the Congregation, according to the Heart of God.

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The text of St. John, which I referred to at the beginning, illuminates beautifully the experience of our charism. When others ask us for our charism, many of us respond quickly *“to contemplate, live and proclaim the love of God incarnate in Jesus”*. But are we really aware of what we say? Have we had the same experience as John?

If we go through the life of the Apostle John, we discover what he lived faithfully so as to proclaim what he had seen, heard and felt. He left everything to follow Jesus, he was with Jesus during his apostolic life and was with Him on Golgotha at the foot of the cross, *welcoming* in his mind and heart the love of his Lord given to the utmost, *receiving* and keeping with fidelity the last words of his Master, *taking* Mary as his Mother. And before the empty tomb believed. From this experience, John speaks to us of the Word of Life, inviting us to have the same experience.

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John’s language is passionate, his words come full love and certainty, and could not be otherwise; he has experienced the Lord in such a way that he cannot

remain silent. This experience changed his life and the first effect of it was joy. How are we experiencing all this? How are we experiencing joy personally and communally? Is what we are contemplating and experiencing something that fills us with joy, that seeps into our hearts and inspires us to proclaim it?

Each of us has within our reach the ability to be like Mary at the feet of Jesus in our time of prayer, in adoration, listening to and welcoming His Word, in the Eucharist. Here we have the wonderful opportunity to welcome and listen to the pierced heart; of entering into his feelings, learning from his attitudes. There we can find out where he put his heart, to what and with whom he was more sensitive, with whom he spent his time, with whom he shared the table ... We need to ask ourselves: from everything we have contemplated, heard and seen, what are we living? What are we proclaiming? What happens when we share the treasure within us?

Solitude and silence are privileged spaces to help us to find ourselves and with the truth that we want to proclaim. We need the silence that becomes contemplation, that causes us to enter into God's silence; from this silence is born the Word, the Word that is reparation, healing; from this silence the urgency of the mission is born with strength, which leads us towards our neighbour: to listen to and be sensitive to their pain, to offer them a word and above all a witness of life.

The strength of the proclamation comes from the Spirit, *“you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses”* (Acts 1.8). It is the Spirit that gives us the courage to live the Gospel and to proclaim it boldly. This is the experience that Jesus had and left with us *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to free the oppressed, to proclaim the Lord’s year of mercy”* (Lk 4: 18-19).

To understand our personal, community and Congregational mission we need to come back regularly to the Upper Room where the disciples remained together with Mary praying and waiting the promised Spirit. Our whole life and mission to be inspired by this icon of the emerging Church. The fruitfulness of our mission depends on a relentless personal and community prayer, the witness of unity in the community *“they had one heart and one soul”* (Acts 4:32) and the testimony of the love and joy that the Holy Spirit infuses into those who seek and are willing to open up to his re-creative action. *“Prior to action, the Church is a witness and irradiation”* (John Paul II).

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To ensure a missionary fire following the example of the early apostles, we need to return to the simplicity and freshness of the witness of the Word, because we pray what we preach and we preach what we pray; we experience what we give to others and we give to others what we experience. Pope Francis said: *“We cannot proclaim the Gospel of Jesus without concrete evidence in life. Whoever listens to us and sees us, must be able to see in our actions what they hear on our lips, and give glory to God. The incoherence of the faithful and their pastors between what they say and what they do, between the word and their lifestyle, undermine the credibility of the Church”*.

From what has been contemplated, seen and heard the Word was born. If we live our mission to proclaim the Gospel faithfully, we need to invest time in listening to the Word and allowing ourselves to be shaped by it. We need so much to find God, before proclaiming him? To respond to this question

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with sincerity is essential, because the answer will be the best thermometer of our missionary zeal. It is in the experience of the encounter with the Lord and having being deeply loved and transformed by Him, where passion of the one who bears witness is born. *“I said: I will remember him, nor speak any more in his name, but his word in my heart became as a fire burning deep within my bones, and although I tried so hard to hold it in, I could not”* (Jer 20: 9).

Sisters, if we live the experience of being with the Lord, if we are able to see him, to touch him at times of prayer, in life, in the poor, if we listen to his Word and let it come into our hearts, we can proclaim what we have experienced, and those who listen and come, will have a deep desire to have the same experience. The Good Mother, whose feast we celebrate this month, kept repeating: *“We must get used to bringing God closer to us”*.

Our Founders also knew how to be fascinated by the mystery of God, to enter into his heart, contemplating his love. They knew how to see, hear, feel the Living Word and to proclaim it, so that everyone could participate in that life. What they sought was to be in communion with the Father of life. That is what they lived and proclaimed. And that is what we also want to live and proclaim. Is that not true?

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Maybe we urgently need to remember the words and that St. Paul addressed to Timothy, but at this moment they are directed to you and to me: *“I invite you to stir into a flame the gift of God that you received”* (2 Tim 1.6) Perhaps we need to revive profoundly our first love, remembering his call, his

unconditional love for each of us, *“We then can only be carriers of the consolation of God, his tenderness towards everyone, if we have already experienced the joy be comforted and loved by Him”* (Pope Francis).

Thanks John, Henriette and Pierre, and many others, for you have led the way on how we must speak of God, not from cold ideas or something learned in a book or in a university, that so often freezes the soul, but from the witness of our personal experience, from the joy and delight of our faith, because only then, what we proclaim will be the Gospel, will be the Good News.

The witness of the Good News is what has been seen, can give witness to because it has been experienced and is something to be proclaimed or, why not, cried aloud. And the greater the experience, the greater the strength of the witness. *“We cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard”* (Acts 4:20). The world needs witnesses, not professionals of the Gospel. The witness lives in the reality of today. This is where the human being is. Your life does not run outside problems, questions and suffering that are experienced in the world today. Your vision of life is enriched by the experience of God.

We are called to proclaim the love and mercy of God in our lives, discovering the paths that lead us to the most needy, to the oppressed, expressing admiration, tenderness, compassion, and offering forgiveness, being generators of hope. Opening our ears to be responsive, attentive, sensitive... Learning to look through Jesus' eyes and asking like Bartimaeus, *“Lord that I may see”*. Offering our hands to cure, to heal wounds, to serve. And using our feet to go to places of risk, pain and conflict, alert in approaching those on the roadside.

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Let us ask the Lord to give us the grace to be credible witnesses of the Good News of the Gospel and that we may be inspired by what inspired him, this is the best way to proclaim the Kingdom and be faithful to the mission that He has entrusted to us *“Go therefore and make disciples from all nations ... teaching them to fulfil all that I have commanded you. I am with you always, until the end of the world”* (Mt 28: 19-20).

***“Happy Feast of the Good Mother”***