

THE SAME SPIRIT

*Emperatriz Arrobo ss.cc
General Superior*

INFO SS.CC. SISTERS N°38 – OCTOBER 20TH 2016

SHARED MISSION



“There is a variety of gifts, but the Spirit is the same, there is a diversity of ministries, but the Lord is the same. There is a variety of functions, but it is the same God who works in all of them. In each one the Spirit is manifested for the common good...” (1 Cor 12: 4-7).

In continuity with the theme of the previous Info “Enhancing life by giving it”, I want to reflect with you on an issue that concerns us and commits us all to a “shared mission”. It is a call to reflect on our Sacred Hearts mission in the Church today and to discover how we can be more united among ourselves and with others, to build the Kingdom from the richness of our charism. The Sacred Hearts charism has a universal meaning, it is not the property of the Congregation, it is of the people of God. As our last General Chapter stated when it says “*we are bearers of a charism that has much to contribute to today's world*”.

For many years we have been insisting on and encouraging the Congregation to network, to work again on the role of the laity in our ministries. Shared mission, is an area of diversity and apostolic complementarity. It is to discover that our charism is a gift to other Christians; It is to discover that beyond our capabilities and limitations, the Spirit awakens a great richness of gifts, services and ministries for the common good.

It is a call to reflect on our Sacred Hearts mission in the Church today and to discover how we can be more united among ourselves and with others, to build the Kingdom from the richness of our charism.

... the mission is not ours, it is of the Church, and therefore is more effective when done in communion with others.

Shared mission, is a new expression in the language of the Church. For Pedro Lopez, a Redemptorist religious, shared mission “*is born from a community understanding of mission and the necessary correlation between all forms of life and ministry to meet the challenges that our world presents to evangelization*”. In other words, the

mission is not ours, it is of the Church, and therefore is more effective when done in communion with others. This mission is the only mission in which everyone, secular and religious, are called to work together, each contributing their own personal or institutional charism. In this way, mission and charism enlighten each other, enriching the mission and making it more fruitful.

More and more, we see more clearly the need to work together with the laity in our pastoral fields. Some lay people want to live their Christianity from our charism, and ask to be integrated as SS.CC. laity, sharing with us our spirituality and mission, while at the same time offering the Congregation and the Church the invaluable contribution of being lay people.

Aware of our reality and the importance of the active and committed participation of the laity in our pastoral fields, such as education, the 35th General Chapter says: “... continue to delegate managerial and administrative management to lay- professionals formed in the charism of the Congregation so that the sisters can commit themselves to the pastoral animation of the Educational Community, as these apostolates are evangelizing platforms”.

This way of understanding of mission supposes a conversion, a change of mentality that fosters collaboration, coresponsibility, trust...

This way of understanding mission supposes a conversion, a change of mentality that fosters collaboration, coresponsibility, trust, not only with the laity, but also with other religious congregations or institutions. It represents a disposition that is open, welcoming, willing to dialogue, to accompany and to facilitate. It means to move from working for the laity to working with the laity.

In a world where the excluded are increasing every day and secularization is growing rapidly, weakening faith, where links between people are being broken down more and more; the sense of being one is deteriorating and individualism is being strengthened, and where violence and lack of respect for life is growing by the minute. The challenges of evangelizing mission are constantly increasing and require us to join resources and forces to consider the mission of the Church in a more effective way, sharing the charism received from our Founders. In this regard, Pope Francis tells us: “A clear sign of the authenticity of a charism is its ecclesial nature, its ability to integrate harmoniously into the life of the holy faithful People of God for the good of all... in communion, even if it hurts, is the place where a charism becomes authentically mysteriously fruitful. If you live out this challenge, the Church can be a model for peace in the world” (Gaudium Evangelii).

For us, this means we have to go another way and learn a new language, working “with” others and not just “for” others; some of us are already on this journey. We are entering into relationships with others, lay and religious, seeking ways, sharing resources... it is an invitation to go beyond the familiar, comfortable, the normal... and to seek new ways of communion and collaboration. This is the grace that we are being offered today.

The steps taken... encourage us to move forward on this path, making the diversity of gifts a treasure for the enrichment of the mission and a witness of unity and communion

With joy we see that in some parts of the Congregation, they are taking very significant steps in this direction. Joint projects are taking place that respond to the urgent needs of the mission today, working with other religious congregations, with committed lay people and institutions for justice and life. The steps taken are very valid signs and encourage us to move forward on this path, making the diversity of gifts a treasure for the enrichment of the mission and a witness of unity and communion: “That all may be one as you, father, are in me, and I in you. That they also may be one

in us: that the world may believe that you sent me” (Jn 17:21). In this info, we will share with you one or two of these experiences that are already happening in the Congregation.

José María Arnaiz, sm, tells us that the reencounter with the laity in the mission field and life, action and spirituality, will become the way and revitalization process for Consecrated Life and for the Church. He invites us to open ourselves to the “inter-intra” as a way of Religious Life: inter-congregacionalidad, inter-generationality, inter-cultural, inter-religious, interpersonal... The “inter” adds José María, is transversal and tends to overcome distance, separation and estrangement; it comes close and complements. This intuition of meeting, leads us to build bridges and social ties, invites us to join forces and to share great ideals.

In the same vein Father Adolfo Nicolás, Superior General of the Jesuits, speaking on this subject says: *“if the mission is of God, it is God who decides who are its partners and what plans he has for them in the future ... We cannot think of isolated missions, made to our measure, without horizons... we have a mission that is larger than us and our possibilities, so it must be open to others, to reality, to surprises”.* *“The lay people who work with us are not partners in “our” mission, but that everyone, them and us, are partners in the mission of Christ, which is always larger”.* *“Sharing the Mission is not to co-manage tasks or distribute functions, it is to share a spiritual heritage and to participate in a common consciousness of serving the utopia of the Gospel”.*

“The lay people who work with us are not partners in "our" mission, but that everyone, them and us, are partners in the mission of Christ, which is always larger”.

In our time we are experiencing a call of the Spirit, a call to share as laity and consecrated the founding charisms of each religious family and the spirituality that stems from it. This is not easy, we put forward the need to share, “charisms and spirituality”, that perhaps until recently was considered as the property of religious congregations. It would be good to ask: What significant experience of "shared mission" are we experiencing in our Ministry?

Let the Spirit lead us through these new ways of life and mission, where we are all partners in building the Kingdom, where we are all united to the vine which is Christ, to give abundant fruit.