

JOY AND FERVOUR ALWAYS GO TOGETHER (G.M.)

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LEADERSHIP IN THE MANNER OF THE GOOD MOTHER



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“Joy and fervour always go together. So, try to keep the community in peace, unity, good will and mutual support that demonstrates the good spirit and leniency of the superiors” (GM).

The month of November is for us SS.CC. religious a congregational month, because it invites us to remember gratefully the life and mission of our Foundress, and in remembering, we are inevitably led to our congregational roots.

In the process the Congregation is experiencing, and in a particular way in the process of implementing the “new configuration” of the Congregation, it will greatly help us to let ourselves be accompanied by the Good Mother; let us be inspired by her, by her words and by her testimony of life.

The 35th General Chapter asks us to go through a process of reorganization of the Congregation with a leadership that is inclusive, participative, and in dialogue, as Jesus would have done. In this sense it has seemed very significant and illuminating to be reminded of the leadership of the Good Mother. In these times of change, the Good Mother can help us to look at things in a new way, with an open mind, with a heart that is amazed by the surprises of God and in this way, to allow life emerge with fidelity and creative audacity.

To look at things in a new way, with an open mind, with a heart that is amazed by the surprises of God

To speak of the Good Mother and her leadership to those who are supposed to know much of all this, seems very risky. However, remembering what we already know and remembering it gratefully is good for us all.

Re-reading her writings, “the notes” and the correspondence, we found no document on leadership, nothing... But what we found is much more important. We found her life, her testimony, and some written advice she sent to Superiors. I imagine that it was not easy to encourage, accompany and govern the nascent community, with so many young people who wanted to enter. She was inexperienced, with a mission that brimmed over, without economic means, in the midst of a society hostile to religion, in hiding; facing various crises, both her own and those of the new Institute, sisters leaving or dying... and yet what comes to us is the testimony of a woman who knew all her sisters, who cared for them, who looked at the heart of each one and placed it next to the Heart of God.

Who cared for them and placed it next to the Heart of God

As we all know, the Good Mother had a series of human qualities that helped her a great deal in her service as foundress, animator and companion of her sisters, but it is obvious that these human qualities were not enough for the great mission that The Lord had entrusted to her. The secret to living her mission in fidelity was in her long hours of adoration at the foot of the tabernacle, where she allowed herself to be steeped in the immense and merciful love of God towards her and her emerging community.

The spiritual animation of the sisters was always present in her writings, in them appears a spirituality clearly based on the Gospel. Her life was based on trust, surrender and a total giving of herself to God. “*Lord, here I am, do with me what you please*”. “*All for God, all in God, all to God, this is the only consoling truth*”. “*All for God, all according to God. Everything should start, or at least end there*” (GM).

An essential characteristic of her leadership is her absolute trust in “divine providence”, a trust sustained by a deep experience of God, an experience that she transmits to her sisters and encourages them to live in total self giving to the merciful love of God. “*Go to the Good God with confidence; May his love sustain you*”. “*God knows better than we what we need; Let us abandon ourselves to his divine Providence. Absolute abandonment to God is the shortest way to obtain perfection*” (GM).

Live in total giving to the merciful love of God

Another very important characteristic of the leadership of the Good Mother is her continuous call to union and communion, she clearly feels her concern when “this” is deficient. “*I am happy to have them all. I found that each and every one seemed quite happy*”. For her, the experience of communion was fundamental in the journey of following Jesus and in evangelizing witness. “*May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. May they also be one in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me*” (Jn 17:21).

We could continue to remember other characteristics of the service of leadership of the Good Mother, her constant invitation: to abandon herself into the Heart of God, to proclaim and live a constant Fiat, to live in peace, communion... but this is not about exhausting what she said and lived, but to invite us to discover the calls made by the Good Mother today, especially in the service of leadership that we are all experiencing in one way or another.

To welcome life is what the Good Mother did and what she would ask of each of us today. In this path of reconfiguration, her advice, her words take on new life. It is a path of communion, with many questions, it asks us to leave personal preferences to welcome the life that is being born.

Welcome the life that is being born

The founders and superiors of the first communities did not have everything planned, nor did they know all the answers, but knowing that they were united to the “*Vine as the branches*” (Jn 15: 4), gave them confidence to continue the journey begun, a security that did not come from themselves but from their abandonment to divine Providence. From this assurance of the love of God holding and guarding them, “what the Good God guards, is well guarded” (GM), and feeling as one body, build community and proclaim the merciful love of God.

On the other hand, the Good Mother, in the face of any difficulty that the sisters had in their mission as superiors, always went back to the Gospel, to leave everything in the Heart of the Good God, to accept the cross with patience, to turn their eyes continually towards Jesus. I think this is the best manual for a superior, for a community that wants to live committed, in search. “... *the rest shall be given to you ...*” (Mt 6:33).

To leave everything
in the Heart of the
Good God

If today we asked the Good Mother for “advice”, she would respond to us as she did with Sister Justine Charret. “*Ask the Divine Heart of Jesus to support you. Only He can and wants everything for you. With all my soul, I desire that you be totally for Him*”.