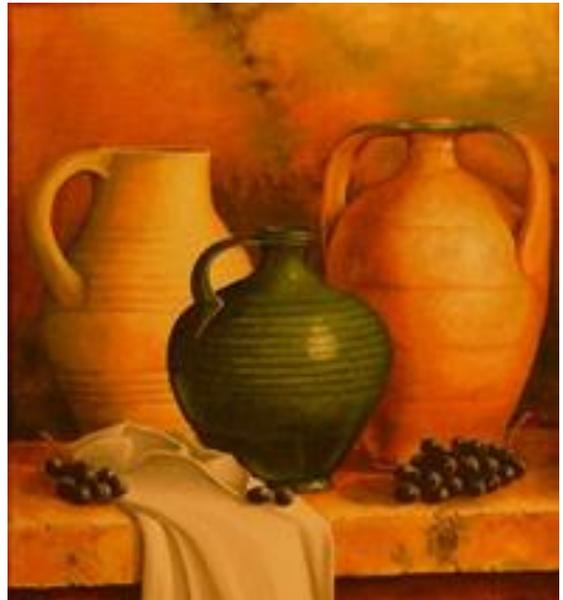


TO LIVE FROM THE NEWNESS OF GOD

*Emperatriz Arrobo ss.cc
General Superior*

INFO SS.CC. SISTERS N°43 – MARCH 20TH 2017

“NEW WINE IN NEW WINESKINS”



This INFO comes to us at the heart of our Lenten experience, a privileged time for conversion, to turn our gaze to the Lord and to discover where He is coming from, offering us His saving mercy that renews and transforms our heart, “*I will give them a new heart And I will give them a new spirit*” (Ez 36:26).

Jesus asks us to prepare our hearts to welcome the newness that God is giving to the Congregation.

This liturgical time, offers us an environment and an encouraging moment to internalize and experience with the Lord the new path that we going through as a Congregation. We are invited to experience the changes and challenges that the way ahead entails and demands, with a new heart and spirit and to make alive in us the

words of Jesus “*no one puts new wine into old wineskins, because the wine would burst the skins and then both the wine and the wineskins would be lost. New wine, new wineskins!*” (Mark 2:22). Jesus asks us to prepare our hearts to welcome the newness that God is giving to the Congregation. The newness of the Spirit (new wine) must be received in new wineskins, in free hearts, where the Word of God is contained, a word that engenders and provokes newness.

The example that Jesus presents is very eloquent. A new wineskin has the capacity to expand, to stretch and to receive the new wine that is deposited into it. In contrast, an old wineskin cannot do this, because as time passes, it hardens and loses its elasticity for the changes, therefore, it cannot receive new wine because it will burst. Jesus makes it very clear that the newness of His Person and His Word cannot fit into old molds, since a new life needs a new mind and heart.

In this new organization of the Congregation that we are experiencing, our resistances, fears and doubts will surely appear at times; Nevertheless, through faith we know that God will go forward with his plan for the Congregation; Each one of us can only say with Mary and our Foundress: "Here I am, your will be done". So that this new wine that God gives us, can act in us and in the people we serve, we need to: make changes, renew ourselves, venture through new paths, build bridges, risk... in a word, be new wineskins.

We must put aside that which does not help us, that which hardens us and removes our elasticity like the old wineskins. Society, the Church, the Congregation, everything is changing. Let us recall the words of Pope Francis: *"The Church asks some changes from all of us, she asks us to leave aside the perishable structures: They do not serve! And to take on new ones, those of the Gospel. The Gospel way is a varied way, which brings the law to fullness. Yes! But in a new way: it is new wine, in new wineskins. May the Lord grant us the grace of not being prisoners, but to grant us the grace of joy and freedom that brings us the newness of the Gospel"* (Homily in Santa Marta, September 5, 2014).

May the Lord grant us the grace of not being prisoners, but to grant us the grace of joy and freedom that brings us the newness of the Gospel

The Pope invites us not to be afraid of changes, to put aside the structures that no longer serve and to accommodate the newness of the Gospel. It is not that what we have experienced until now in the Congregation no longer serves us, no, it has helped us to come to where we are and to be who we are today, it has been very important in the growth and propagation of the Congregation, it has made us mature as Religious, adapting the charism to the reality of our world. But in the presence of this "new wine", of this new face of the Congregation, of this new way in which we want to live the ss.cc. mission, we must also put new means, "new wineskins", new hopes, new life.

Sometimes it happens that we want to experience the newness, but we are not willing to accept the changes that the newness requires. We want many things to change, but we are not willing to do what is necessary for these changes to happen. We want to live according to the will of God, but we refuse to walk the path that leads us to do his will. We want to change the world, but we do not let Jesus change us. In a word, we insist that God pour new wine into our old wineskins. As Pope Francis tells us: *"It is the sin of so many Christians who cling to what has always been done and do not allow the wineskins to be changed. And they end up not fully living, fed up, patched, meaningless. Sin is a closed heart that does not listen to the voice of the Lord, that is not open to the newness of the Lord, to the Spirit who always surprises us"*.

What seems impossible, God makes possible

Jesus change us. In a word, we insist that God pour new wine into our old wineskins. As Pope Francis tells us: *"It is the sin of so many Christians who cling to what has always been done and do not allow the wineskins to be*

When there is new wine in our heart, when we let God be God in us and let ourselves be led by His Word and by His Spirit, we are capable of risking, of overcoming fear, of trusting others, of forgiving, of loving ... What seems impossible, God makes possible. Pope Francis tells us: *"Continue to listen to the signs of the Spirit that opens up new horizons and makes new paths, always starting from the supreme rule of the Gospel and inspired by the creative audacity of its founders"*.

To be willing to live from the newness, God will help us: to overcome our natural fears in the face of the unknown; to embrace a path that requires patience, determination and audacity to change not only our way of seeing, but also our way of acting. True renewal is not measured in superficial actions, it requires the difficult work of internal conversion, a profound change of mind and heart.

Continue to listen to the signs of the Spirit that opens up new horizons and makes new paths...

This new stage of the process the Congregation is experiencing is a new time of grace and blessing from the Lord, and from Him and with Him we must live it wisely, so that what God wants from us and through us, can have a happy ending. Whoever does the work is ultimately God, we are his instruments, but without his blessing we can do nothing.

New beginnings are epiphanies of God's faithfulness and human hope, they are always a blessing. New beginnings remind us of the immense possibilities that await us if we are willing to be disturbed by God, to allow him to do what he wants to do through us. No matter what the obstacles, God will always be greater.

May we open our minds and prepare our hearts on this journey towards Easter, so that the fresh air of the Risen Jesus, the strength and newness of the Gospel, and all the new wine that God wants to give us in this new stage of the journey produce in us many fruits, and lead us to be new wineskins, capable of giving new answers to the new situations of the Church and the world.