



OPENING OF THE 20TH GENERAL CHAPTER

23rd November 2021

"We know that God works all things for the good of those who love Him, those whom He has called according to His purpose". (Rom 8,28)

Dear Sisters,

After a long and active wait, we are preparing to celebrate the Chapter, an event of great importance for the life and mission of the Institute, which will have an impact on the Church and the world of today. However, let us not take this event as a point of arrival but as a point of departure (an exodus) that will launch us into the future as we begin our journey into the third century since our foundation.

God has given us a long time, thanks to COVID 19, to prepare and dispose ourselves better as a "body". This has been the more profitable outcome of the postponement. We have had time to live the preparation process in depth, with the involvement of the whole Institute, and sometimes of the Family. We have experienced the joy and the responsibility of each one in the awareness that life is at stake.

The Chapter is a crucial time, and the key question that has accompanied us from the beginning now emerges with full force: **"Can we still live our purpose as we begin our third century?"** The hour has come to discern and make the decisions that respond to this question.

Will we be able to listen to the urgent calls born of our reflection, prayer and discernment in order to undertake the essential, profound changes we need, taking into account the present reality of the Institute?

To live our purpose today, do we feel urged to a profound conversion of our lives as persons, communities and Institute, in order to collaborate in God's Mission, aware as we are of the risks to human and planetary survival?

We know that the Chapter is a spiritual event, that is to say, it is the work of the Spirit, to whom we will listen, listening to one another and to the cry of humanity, so as to discern the choices we must make to vivify the Charism and respond to the needs of our wounded world and planet. These choices must have the imprint of our own Charism.

At present the whole Church is beginning a synodal journey. A Chapter is a synodal assembly par excellence, with the indispensable characteristics of listening, dialogue, discernment and decision-making together.

To live this dynamic of synodality, we need **listening** as the basis for dialogue lived in freedom and humility. We need deep inner silence as we listen to one another. In this way we will give space to the Spirit to reconnect us with our purpose; to give us the lucidity to see the reality of the Institute at this crucial stage of our history; to inspire us with responses consistent with our needs and the needs of

today. The hour has come to listen and respond to this question: ***Where does God want to lead us as Institute and as Family?***

We talk a lot about communion and creating communion. Now is the time to live this and to express it by bridging our differences in such a way that the contribution of each and every one of us helps us to build a future of hope for ourselves, for those who come after us, for the Church, for humanity and for the planet.

I believe that these are the deep desires that inhabit us all, which does not mean that it will be easy to translate them into concrete, viable and prophetic options. Let us accept in advance that we may encounter difficulties and stumbling blocks, bearing in mind that we are going to live this Chapter online, and none of us comes with previous experience. Let us prepare ourselves nevertheless to live this time of grace with confidence, responsibility and flexibility, accepting what the Spirit is telling us from within. The Spirit alone knows the time and the direction to take. Fears and insecurities will vanish if we allow the Spirit to manifest and express Herself freely through us.

God's plans for our future are good. Let us listen to what God tells us through the prophet: "I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord, "plans for your welfare and not disaster, to give you a future full of hope". (Jer. 29,11)

In communion with all our sisters, with the whole Family and with all those who are accompanying us in a special way during these days, let us "set out for the other shore" urged on the words of the Founder: "Nothing now can check your course. Go Forward! May Jesus, Mary and Joseph be with you always". (Preface R.G. 1851)

Ana María