

Mother General's Message

Rome
8 December 2013
Feast of the Immaculate Conception



My dear Sisters,

In this very first letter that I address to you all, let me greet you with a heartfelt expression of my fraternal affection.

Through the Sister capitulars of the 47th General Chapter, the Lord has placed his hand upon me that I may serve our Congregation with ever greater dedication and humility as your Superior General. In faith, I receive this mission with fear and trembling in my being, aware of my human limitations in the face of such immense responsibility. What gives me courage is that I am blessed with the presence of wonderful Sisters Assistants who will bring the best of their qualities and skills to the General Council. Together, we will do our best to carry out our mission of service.

At the outset, allow me to say that I count on your daily prayers. This is the most precious support you could ever give to me and the General Council members. After all, it was your prayer that brought God's guidance and light to the election process during the 2013 General Chapter. Thank you for all your messages of love, trust and encouragement.

In the year 2013 we have witnessed and experienced many significant events that brought about changes in the Universal Church: from the resignation of the Holy Father Benedict XVI to the joyful welcome of his Holiness Pope Francis. The pilgrimages to the tomb of St. Peter during this Holy Year of Faith rallied us to renew our faith, to deepen our commitment as disciples even as we acknowledge our frailties.

The Congregation likewise was challenged to live in faith the change of leadership during the 2013 General Chapter. Mother Myriam KITCHAROEN was for us an inspiring model of faith. She was also our dynamic and charismatic leader for the past twelve years. She has accomplished much to make the Congregation move forward in unity, in rootedness to our origins, with new missionary foundations, new novitiates and strengthened formation, without forgetting the call she launched: to reach the new "areopaghi". In the name of the Congregation, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Mother Myriam for leading us to a deeper following of the WORD during these years.



Fittingly, the Holy Father closed the Year of Faith on the solemnity of Christ the King with a moving message to all Christians, a challenge for us religious. He said that this Holy Year " *was a providential opportunity for us believers to rekindle the flame of faith, that flame that was given to us on the day of baptism.*"

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"In this time of grace, we were able to rediscover the essence of the Christian way, in which faith, together with charity, occupies the primary place,"... "Faith, is truly the cornerstone of the Christian experience because it motivates the choices and actions of our daily lives."

"This experience you have gained in the Year of Faith helps you, first of all, to open yourselves and your communities to encounter with others, above all, those most lacking faith and hope in their lives,"... "There are many people who are in need of a human gesture, a smile, a word of truth, a testimony through which they can experience the closeness of Jesus Christ. Do not deny anyone this sign of love and tenderness that comes from faith".

Pope Francis also said during the General Audience on October 30, 2013 that *"God's love burns away our selfishness, our prejudices, our interior and exterior divisions. The love of God even burns away our sins"*.

Dear Sisters, what we need most today are credible witnesses, who show the beauty of God's love through their words and their lives. As the Holy Father says, we Christians must make God's mercy and tenderness visible through our joyful witness and charity to others. It is good for us to ponder on the quality of our witness as Sisters of St. Paul.



And as we approach the end of this Advent season, may our hearts be filled with the joyful expectation of celebrating Christmas differently, perhaps in a manner more attuned to the spirit of the first Christmas.

It is precisely in poverty, in weakness and humility that he reveals himself and grants us his love, which saves us, heals us, and gives us strength. He asks us only to obey his word and to trust in him, even without understanding everything: *"Here I am Lord; let it be done to me according to your word."* (cf. Lk 1:38). God constantly surprises us, he breaks down our social classes, he wreaks havoc with our plans. And he tells us: trust me, do not be afraid, and let yourself be surprised, leave yourself behind and follow me!

Today, let us all ask ourselves whether we are afraid of what God might ask, or what he does ask. Do I let myself be surprised by God, like Mary, or do I remain caught up in my own safety zone: in forms of material, intellectual or ideological security, taking refuge in my own projects and plans? Do I truly let God into my life?

May our life of faith be like Mary's faithfulness to God. Through trials and pains, even at the foot of the cross, Mary the faithful woman, still standing, utterly heartbroken, yet faithful and strong. (cf. Homily of Pope Francis, October 13, 2013)



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Dear Sisters, in a few weeks you will receive the booklet of the 2013 Capitular Acts with the orientations for the whole Congregation for the next six years. We entrust to the Provincial Chapters, the District and Regional Assemblies the task of establishing the calendar and details of the work of implementation according to the context of each PDR.

Due to several major renovation and repair works being undertaken in the Generalate buildings, there will be no Spiritual Renewal Sessions for the year 2014 but the General Assistants and I will visit the Provinces, Districts and Regions starting January. My first visit will be in France from January 13 to 30.



*With Sr. Mary Ann, Sr. Brigitte, Sr. Marie-Madeleine, Sr. Emily,
Sr. Maria Luisa and Sr. Josiane, I sincerely greet you*

***A Happy Holy Feast of Christmas
and a Joyful New Year!***

S. Maria Goretti Lee
Sister Maria Goretti LEE
Superior General