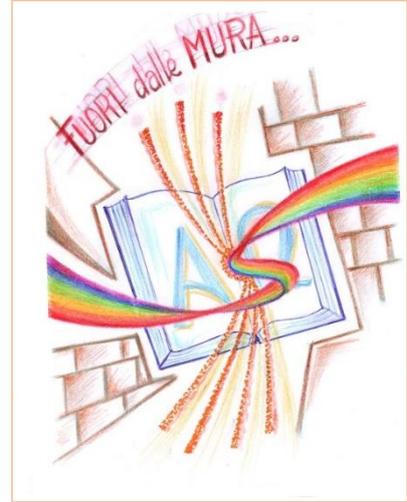


CONCLUSION OF THE XI GENERAL CHAPTER

Caritas Christi urget nos!

Celle Ligure,

27 Novembre 2021



Dear Chapter Sisters,

today, at the end of the celebratory event of our XI General Chapter, song of an immense gratitude and amazement rises up to God, the provident and merciful Father, overflowing from our hearts and souls and involving all of us, Deo gratias.

We lived intense days in the light of the Holy Spirit, we allowed ourselves to be involved and, perhaps with wonder, we discovered in each other a deep passion for consecrated life and for our charism. And this beauty, which we shared and communicated to each other, personally did us good, warmed our hearts with the same "fire", made us reborn from within and enthused us as we sought together the will of God for our Congregation.

Dear Chapter Sisters, as we wished at the beginning of this time of celebration of the Chapter, we have lived a confrontation and a search "with simplicity and humility, with openness and freedom of heart, with positivity and truthfulness of thought, with parrhesia and synodality" as true sisters, as true "ciocote" and the Holy Spirit has amazed us with His surprises! We walked together and, little by little, the gentle breeze of the Holy Spirit blew and, in a surprising way, washed our inner eyes, made unity prevail over conflict, merged personal differences into communion and suggested new paths and languages that warmed our hearts.

We have experienced this time of chapter as an event of the Holy Spirit. Of course, we have experienced the effort of the search, the suffering of understanding what is good for the whole of our Congregation, the tears of purification of our gazes and our feelings, the patience of attentive listening, the difficulty of discerning the paths on which to walk in the next six years, but we have truly felt ourselves in the cenacle of the Spirit. An open cenacle, without walls, open to the boundaries of the Continents, which made us be with all the Sisters and at the same time with the Little House, with the Church and with all wounded and suffering humanity, lost and begging for love. All of them were here with us and crowded this chapter house!

We discovered each other and, in the light of the Holy Spirit, so much potential for good emerged from each of us and so many gifts of grace that we generously shared. We rejoiced and were enriched by the beauty of the different cultures that we Cotenghine Sisters have and embody. We became more aware that, for our Congregation and for each Sister, it is a grace to be together from different continents and countries, and that we are courageously called to live processes of intercultural growth.

We lived a profound fraternity, we prayed intensely together, we listened to each other, we were mutually enriched by the freshness and enthusiasm of the younger Sisters and the wisdom and thoughtfulness of the older Sisters. We savoured the harmony and reciprocity of our two Families, contemplative life and apostolic life: an immense gift and moving communion, unique in the Church and a gift always to be welcomed, deepened and witnessed to.

We debated and deepened the theme of the Chapter: "Outside the walls: the courage to dare new ways of evangelisation", in the specificity of being consecrated women, co-responsible and on a journey.

After having understood the reality of our Congregation, the research, the debate and the chapter discernment were situated in a project perspective. As a workshop of the Spirit, we looked to the future, to the hopes and desires that we saw as horizons and as luminous dreams. In the light of the Gospel, our Charism and the Magisterium of the Church, we saw glimmers of light in the darkness of the crisis that we too are going through, together with the whole of consecrated life in the Church. Together we have identified generative processes of life, feasible paths to walk with hope towards the fulfilment of the desired horizons and emerged from listening to the Sisters, during the time of consultation and delivered to the Chapter by the various Circumscription Assemblies.

As I said at the opening of the Chapter, new ways of evangelisation are already dawning through a form of consecrated life that is missionary and evangelical, prophetic and fraternal. We Sisters are "consecrated women and courageous mothers of faith and love, of freedom and hope". Mothers who see in the relational capacity already sprouting new and slender shoots of novelty in the ordinary of our lives, "in the fraternal relationships and closeness with the Sisters, in the daily relationships of our Houses, in the simple relationships of our proximity with the poor, with the people who crowd the streets of life".

Our being mothers, as Saint Cottolengo told us, opens us to new horizons of the Gospel, "you are their mothers...many times the afflictions that the little ones feel in their hearts are more serious than those they feel in their bodies; this is where you must help them, you must speak to them about God...showing them that they are children of God" (DP 214). Pope Francis also invites us to this, when on 10 May 2019, addressing all consecrated women in the world, he pointed to the Cottolengo Sisters who "feel like mothers", to explain that the Church needs consecrated women, not so much for the function they perform, but above all for their "being mothers" in that "the maternity of the Church and the maternity of Our Lady have a reflection in the consecrated woman, a total reflection". These words, which I heard directly from the Pope, I carry in my heart, and they always move me!

For each one of you, Chapter Sisters, I give thanks to God! Elected and convoked, you have lived this call with a sense of deep responsibility and as a diakonia to our Congregation. Together, you have not only sought correctness of procedure and intelligent docility to the choices of method, but you have essentially and primarily shed light, as much as possible, on the will of God for the journey of the Congregation, in a spirit of synodal research, purified by the sole desire to discern the plan of God, in the continuous communion of hearts. Deo gratias!

I would like here, with all of you, to thank in a very special way Sister Mirella Bocchi and the Sisters Councillors who have completed their mandate: Sister Maria Elena Fusero, Sister Giacinta Mukkath, Sister Nicoletta Arrivabene, Sister Rosella Busnelli, who love our Congregation and each Sister, who have served with competence and humility for the good of all. May God the Father grant each one the abundance of His grace and blessings. Deo gratias!

Now, in the presence of all of you, Chapter Sisters, who represent here the two Families of our Congregation,

I DECLARE OFFICIALLY CLOSED

TODAY 27 NOVEMBER 2021

in CELLE LIGURE,

the XI GENERAL CHAPTER

of the SISTERS OF SAINT JOSEPH B. COTTOLENGO

We return to our communities with bright, joyful, free hearts. We are aware that we are consecrated women, carrying with God, and together Divine Providence will guide us to discover new paths of trust among us Sisters, new paths that go towards God and towards man, "and we will find the fullness of heart, a heart of mothers, large and spacious, crowded by many, especially by those who are most alone and forgotten".

Let us return to our homes full of desire and hope, and to those who ask us: where are we going? Are we dying as a Congregation? Do they still want us as Sisters in the services? Let us bring them joyful announcements of new things that we have experienced here at the Chapter. Let us tell everyone that our Congregation is alive, that the Cotenghine Sisters are precious "mothers" in the Church and in the Little House, on every continent and in different cultures. We share with them the enthusiasm and the renewed awareness of the beauty of our Congregation, a beauty that we have experienced here and that always amazes us for its "uniqueness" and its "unity", for the actuality of the charism of St. G. B. Cottolengo, gift and prophecy in the Church and in different cultural areas, where it is incarnated, transmitted and generates joy, life and good for the poor.

Chapter Sisters, be bearers of prophecy and hope to all the Sisters, and together with them, we await the promulgation of the "Acts". Let us live this expectation as a time to make space in our hearts, to cherish each other in prayer, to cultivate the desire to welcome them.

May the Immaculate Virgin, Queen of the Little House, new creature par excellence, continue to be for us a model of the Lord's disciple, of a mother open and willing to fulfil God's plan. To her we entrust ourselves and entrust our horizons and chapter planning!

St Joseph B. Cottolengo, the Venerable Sister Maria Carola Cecchin, the Servant of God Mother Marianna Nasi and all the Saints of the Little House who have faithfully accompanied and supported us throughout the Chapter celebration, may they continue to intercede for us!

Deo gratias always and ... Courage, forward in Domino (cf DP 1), with renewed confidence and hope, ... certain expectation of "new wineskins" and "new life" ... TOGETHER always!