



Merry Christmas 2021

Dearest Sisters.

Merry Christmas! It is Christmas, a time of joy and encounter, a time of gift and welcome, a time of tenderness and littleness, a time of gratitude and wonder, a time of light and beauty, a time of grace and blessing!

Merry Christmas! Moved and with a heart full of gratitude to God, who comes in our fragile humanity to be with us, I enter your community, Sisters loved by the Lord, to meet you, embrace you, be with you and together pause before the crib to

contemplate the Son of God, Child for us.

God really wanted to be a fragile and needy child to be very close to us. God became one of us, he made himself identical to us, and we can welcome Him and He welcomes us. The Child Jesus is so close to each one, that we can try to embrace Him. Let us embrace this Child God and God will embrace our life, yes, your life, and He embraces us all because He loves us all.

Dearest sisters, this encounter between God and our humanity is Christmas. Christmas is therefore joy, tenderness, goodness, light, a shared feast, an encounter that makes us feel good, an encounter with God, as daughters in the His Son, and an encounter among us, all sisters, all brothers.

During the month of the celebration of the XI General Chapter, we perceived and felt you very close to us, we experienced the encounter with all of you, even with those who are physically far away. We lived days of active communion, joyful fraternity, intense prayer, passion for our charism, for our Congregation, for our Little House, painful research, synodal discernment, intercultural richness, shared hope, and ecclesial atmosphere. The presence of the Holy Spirit was a daily gift and together we lived a fruitful Pentecost experience.

The theme of the XI General Chapter, **Outside the Walls: The Courage to Dare New Ways of Evangelization**, in the Light of the Holy Spirit and in the specificity of being consecrated women, co-responsible and on the way, led us to glimpse in different "**courages**", new ways of evangelization for us Cottolengo Sisters in every Continent in which we are present:

1. **The courage to be a gift:** the dream of the surplus of love, the waste of Bethany.
2. **The courage to grow:** towards a form of life with the taste of the Gospel so that Christ may live more in us.
3. **The courage for a sustainable future:** feeling called to an integral ecological conversion.
4. **The courage to communicate "good" the "Good":** a communication connected to our identity of consecration and mission
5. **The courage to participate:** with an active and responsible participation on the part of each of us, in mutual respect, for a communal journey of holiness, in our specific mission.
6. **The courage to grow in reciprocity:** walking together to be generative Congregations and communities, in the Little House and in the "parresia" of the Spirit.

The Family Assembly of Contemplative Life, in its spiritual and synodal discernment, brought out the following "**courages**" as ways of evangelization proper to monastic life: the courage to be adult women, the courage of new shoots, the courage of new lifestyles, the courage of synodality, the courage of a sustainable future.

While the Assembly of the Family of Apostolic Life identified other "**courages**" that we feel necessary for our opening to new ways of evangelization, in the different cultures in which we are present: the courage to improve ourselves, the courage to be happy, the courage of synodality.

Dear Sisters, we concluded the celebration of the Chapter with a great deal of hope in our hearts, which we wish to transmit to you on this holy day of Christmas. Sisters, in our Congregation and in the Little House, new ways of evangelization are already dawning through a form of consecrated life that is more missionary and evangelical, more prophetic and fraternal. We Sisters are "consecrated women and courageous mothers of faith and love, of freedom and hope". Mothers who glimpse, in the prophecy of relationship and proximity, new and slender sprouts of novelty in the ordinary of our life, in the fraternal relationships and closeness among us Sisters, in the relationships of daily life and of taking care in our Houses, in the simple relationships of our proximity with the poor, with the people who crowd the streets of life.

At Christmas, we contemplate this closeness in the Little Jesus who looks at us with such tenderness, who tries to embrace us to tell us that God is tenderness, mercy, providence, always near, always present, always a tender Father, as the Holy Cottolengo told us and wrote.

Dearest Sisters of contemplative life and Sisters of apostolic life, I wish each of you a Christmas of encounter and closeness, first with God, then among us Sisters and with the poor, always! In this encounter, let us open our hearts to everyone and everybody, sisters and brothers, and let us give the One who lives there, the One who called and sent us, the One who loves us and whom we love, and then we will be a prophecy of joy, of goodness, of tenderness, of mercy, of care, of providence! And it is Christmas! It is Christmas in every place and in every day, because God becomes incarnate through us, He becomes close through our closeness, He becomes a custodian through our guarding, He becomes a blessing through our blessing ...

Just as Mary, pregnant with the Word of God, goes to meet Elizabeth and transmits joy, trust and blessing, so we Sisters are mothers pregnant with God to bring to the others we meet. Deo gratias!

Deo gratias, Sisters for your being there, loving and serving, I embrace you with great affection and thank you for your prayers and your love for me. United the Vice Mother Sr. Carla, the Sisters Counsellors of contemplative life, Sr. Patrizia, Sr. Cristina, Sr. Rossella, Sr. Maria Paola degli Angeli, and the Counsellors of apostolic life, Sr. Luisa, Sr. Raffaella, Sr. Anastasia, Sr. Mary, we wish you a joyful Christmas and a happy New Year 2022, in trusting abandonment in God the Provident Father and in the hope that He always brings to fulfillment His promises of Love and Salvation!

Deo gratias and Best wishes for a Merry Christmas!

Madre Elda Bessuto