

INFO SS.CC. SISTERS N°37 – JULY 20TH 2016

Enhance life by giving it



As SS.CC. women, we are called to enhance our life by giving it to the service of the Kingdom, as expressed by the 35th General Chapter: *“We want to live a more meaningful and testimonial religious life in communion, rooted in God and His Kingdom”*. Understood in this way, our religious life will be meaningful if it is revealed with renewed joy, a life that comes from the Lord, intensified and offered to all.

The way to enhance our lives, is the way Jesus shows us. *“Truly, truly, I say to you that if the grain of wheat does not fall into the earth and die, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much fruit”* (Jn 12: 24). Die to live, die in order to produce like the grain of wheat, which to bear fruit must rot away and by going through this process, gives way to a new life and as a result bears much fruit.

The disciples do not understand and are offended when Jesus tells them: *“If the grain of wheat does not die, it will bear no fruit”*. For us these words of Jesus can also be a scandal. We are willing to follow him, but to give one’s life to the end is not easy and we think that this is for others. Deep down we are afraid of the consequences of our total surrender to the Master.

To give abundant life Jesus chose the way of the cross, *“Whoever wishes to follow me, let him renounce himself, take up his cross and follow me”* (Mt. 16, 24). *“No one takes my life, I give it freely”* (Jn 10:18). He asks his disciples to be willing to go along the same road. So for those who follow Jesus, our itinerary is to follow in his way, not alone, but with Him. We are called to enhance our lives, surrendering it, serving, loving, immersing ourselves and losing ourselves in service to others.

*What am I doing with my life?
How am I living? Where and
how do I apply it in daily life?*

The previous letter of INFO spoke about: “Community: challenge and mission”, where we were invited to dig our well, to get covered in mud, to embrace

our clay and the clay of others, to immerse ourselves in the darkness; we could say that to dig our well is an invitation to die to everything that prevents the emergence of life, such as self-reliance, self-adoration, victimhood, individualism, rivalries, jealousies... They call us into a true path of purification, which is a decision and a willingness to enter into a process of transfiguration, not without pain, but with the purpose of allowing the Living Water to flow, which leads to a renewed encounter with Christ that in its turn, will overflow in the giving to others.

We can ask ourselves: What am I doing with my life? How am I living? How am I surrendering? Where and how do I apply it in daily life? Am I an agent of joy, peace, hope, communion in the ministry I do? Is my community a place where I can surrender my life? Am I an agent of communion in my community? To live community life in communion is an element of our charism and an important part of our mission, we know this does not come in a packet, but must be built day by day. We have to take care of our “community-well” to quench the thirst of love, the thirst of mercy, the thirst for communion that the world needs.

In the process which the Congregation is experiencing, it is very important to be willing to stop being the grain, to bear abundant fruit; to learn to let go what is mine, my culture, my way of understanding and doing things, my subtle need sometimes to want to control everything... to begin a new way of relinquishing, of withdrawing, of freedom and to be willing to go where needed for the sake of the mission.

“deny oneself”, “carry the cross”, “lose life”. Here is Jesus again, with his awkward proposals...

We may be tempted, driven by fear, doubt, resistance... to stay as the grain, remembering the past, or we can follow the voice of the Spirit who invites us to take risks, to abandon ourselves with confidence, without fear and with the certainty that it is the Lord who guides our boat. We need to see things from God's perspective, with his eyes. Only then do the various personal, community and Congregation experiences recover their true meaning for our life and for the mission.

As Chiara Lubich tells us: *“Sometimes we imprison our history, without realizing that the past is there to set us free, not to enslave us. To show us a horizon that is always open to the future. To remind us that the roads do not delay us, but intersect, separate, come together, and we always find new surprises, new ways. It is comforting to walk with light luggage together with so many men and women who seek to live differently, trying to give life to the end”.*

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It is true, it is not easy to surrender life freely, so Jesus warns us that if we want to follow him to the end, we have to accept the same fate, including the cross: *“deny oneself”, “carry the cross”, “lose life”*. These three invitations appear to be unacceptable if we see them within the logic of our current world. But, here is Jesus again, with his awkward proposals; this time, to make us think that life can be lived differently; that you can win without being the first, that you can be happy accepting costly commitments and live better when life is surrendered.

Many times we are very concerned with our personal well-being, seeking new courses to enhance our being, to fill it with energy, to be well. Sometimes it seems that the proposal of Jesus in the Gospel, no longer brings newness. However, it remains the exemplary proposal for our way of life. He repeats to us constantly that it is only in giving life that we can find it fully.

The supreme model of human fulfilment is Jesus (Eph 4:13). His secret remains the same as what he teaches us in the Gospel: to give to gain, to lose to succeed, to commit oneself to be free, to die to live.

Live life to the full

Jesus Christ said:

*“Whoever wants to save his life will lose it
and who gives it for Me, will regain it in eternal life”.*

*But we are afraid to live life to the full, to give it without reservation.
A terrible survival instinct leads us toward selfishness
and grips us when we want to take risks.*

We keep ourselves safe everywhere to avoid risks.

And above all it is cowardice...

Lord Jesus Christ, we are afraid to live life to the full.

But life, you have given it to us to live it;

it cannot be spent in sterile selfishness.

To live life is to work for others, even though we are not paid;

To do a favour that will not be given back.

To live life is to launch out even in failure, if necessary,

without false caution; It is to burn bridges for the good of others.

We are torches that only have meaning when we burn ourselves;

only then will we be light.

Luis Espinal, sj.