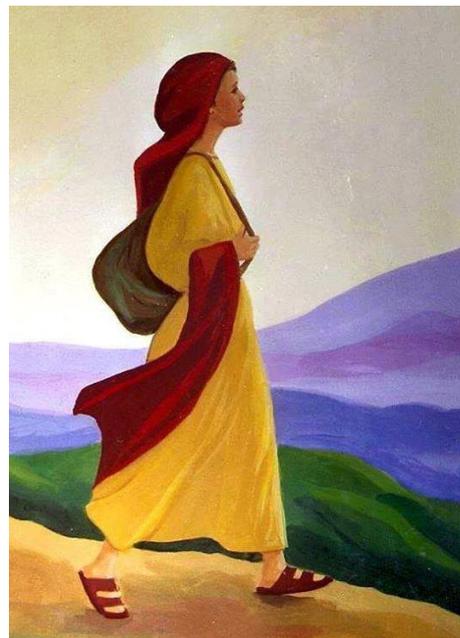


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## *WHOM SHALL I SEND? WHO WILL GO FOR ME?*



In this month dedicated to mission, it is good to remember an important date for our Congregation, the 20<sup>th</sup> October 1792, the day on which the Good Father left the Motte d’Usseau granary. Enlightened and inspired by the witness of St. Capricious, a martyr for the faith, he, decides to put his life into the Lord’s hands and leaves to proclaim the redeeming love of God, in a violent and difficult time. Let us remember his words: *“When I finally left Maumain’s I prostrated myself at the foot of an oak tree not far from the house and I offered my life to God. I had become a priest with the intention of suffering everything, of sacrificing myself to the Good Lord and, if need be, of dying in His service. Nevertheless I had the premonition that I would be saved”*. (P Hilarión Lucas).

This month we have also begun the drawing up of the “Pastoral Plan of the Congregation” (PAC). It is a time to pray, to reflect, and discern about what God is asking of us today. It is a time to make our own the Word of God addressed to Isaiah: *“whom shall I send, who will go for me?”*

Whom shall I send where life is threatened? The need for life reaches us from the whole world and comes in different disguises: the ecological crisis with dramatic consequences and always affecting the most poor; industrial civilization which degrades life and removes opportunities for those most in need; general corruption in our countries, which creates ever more inequality and resentment; the growth of atheism, where there is no need of God; the displaced, growth in the number of refugees and immigrants surviving in dehumanizing situations; the consequences of natural catastrophes, which affect the weakest; domestic violence...

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The writing of the “Pastoral Plan of the Congregation” will be a good opportunity to contemplate, feel, listen to reality and discover what are the calls God is making to us as a Congregation so that we can continue proclaiming his Love. We have been called to allow ourselves to be touched by the cry of the weakest, nevertheless, our response isn’t always coherent. Sometimes, we fill our mouths with words saying how we want to go where life is crying out, where we are most needed... but, are we really ready to leave all and respond in a heartfelt way, like Isaiah: here I am Lord, send me?

In order to respond to what God wants of us each day, and in this moment in our history as a Congregation, we need to look after our encounter with the Lord. We need to dedicate space and time to prayer and to be faithful to it. If we listen to the Word of God addressed to us each day by the Lord; if we listen to our own reality, often in need of conversion; and listen to the cries coming to us from the world, the Church and the Congregation, we will be brought to a renewed response as we creatively search together where and how God wants us to be today.

It is true that we are all already committed in some task, often giving ourselves to the maximum. Nevertheless, at this time in our world, in our Church and in our Congregation, we are called to remain alert, vigilant, attentive and open to the new calls that God is making to us through his Word and reality.

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Pope Francis, when he refers to the sending out of the disciples, reminds us: *In our day Jesus’ command to “go and make disciples” echoes in the changing scenarios and ever new challenges to the Church’s mission of evangelization, and all of us are called to take part in this new missionary “going forth”. Each Christian and every community must discern the path*

*that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the “peripheries” in need of the light of the Gospel” (EG 20).*

We know that these calls to awaken, to get up, to go out, to start off, are discovered in prayer corroborated by life, and discerned in community. In the evaluations which the sisters made on the “*Formation of local Superiors and Communities*”, they express among other things, the importance of the involvement of the community, in the common search for the will of God in order to respond to the mission.

If we pause to revise our life and mission authentically, we will discover that there is an explicit call to be more aware of how our “being and doing” actually is, how we are in the tasks that we are carrying out and what changes do we need to make so that our “doing” is more coherent with Gospel values. At times the call is to revise and change our way of assuming our daily commitments. If we are sincere in evaluating our daily “doing”, we can learn to be better every day.

Perhaps we need to ask ourselves: how can we change our mental mindsets, our habits... strengthened and repeated for so many years? Nicodemus put the same question to Jesus. “*How can someone be born when they are old?*” Nicodemus asked. “*Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!*” Jesus answered, “*...no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit*” (Jn.3, 4-5). Let us allow the Spirit of the Lord to transform us, inspire us,

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convert us and enable us to be born again, to change what we need to change so as to respond to the mission in the most gospel way, with more availability, according to the Heart of God.

In this journey that we are undertaking as a Congregation, we hear God's call to collaborate with Him in the building of the Kingdom. It is a call addressed to each one of us, by the Lord who says: "Whom shall I send? Who will go for me?". This request may produce certain fear in us, but the mission comes from God, and it is He who takes away fear. These words of Jesus "*do not be afraid*" are repeated in all the calls and in all the "sending out". When Mary felt confused by the announcement of the angel, she has this response "*Do not be afraid Mary..., because for God nothing is impossible*" (Lk 1, 37). It is this love of God, which chooses, calls, forms, consecrates and sends. This is how Paul recognizes it: "*Through the grace of God, I am who I am... yet not I, but the grace of God with me*" (1 Cor, 15, 10).

May we, like Mary, learn to listen to the Lord, to live according to his will. May we "*Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need*" (Rm 12, 11-13). May Mary inspire, encourage and accompany our lives, and teach us to give the joyful and audacious response that the Lord is waiting for: *Here I am, send me!*