



## *Building together, sisters with everyone*

*“That they may be one, Father, as you and I are one...  
So that the world may know that you sent me”.*  
(Jn 17, 21)

Dear Sisters,

Jesus knew already that the unity of his disciples would always be threatened by the weakness, wounds and sins of each one. And he prayed to his Father for them, and also, as the fourth Gospel records, for those who would come after them, encouraged by their word. He knew that the faith of many would depend on the unity and communion of each one, as St. John understood, and he gave great importance to the Prayer of Jesus.

The path of growth takes us through the stages of personal development. And we gradually move from dependence, in which others decide for us, to independence, which makes us autonomous and responsible for our actions and decisions. It is a natural progression.

However, as social beings, we need each other. Interrelationships with others are essential for our lives. Independence cannot be absolute, and true human maturity makes us interdependent. It makes us think of a ‘we’ that includes the others with whom we relate, and in ever-widening circles, with the whole of humanity.

An individualistic world such as ours does not teach us to ‘think of we’, especially when the ‘we’ goes beyond my family, my people, my city or my country.

We need to work internally on the ‘us’, to detect our prejudices, our exaggerated egos, purify our feelings. We have to build it with others, moving from the ‘I’ to the ‘we’ in an attitude of respect

and deep listening, ensuring that communication, knowledge, loyalty, forgiveness, mutual care, ... continue to build human relationships.

Last week the triennial assembly of the UISG (International Union of Superiors General) was held in Rome. The attendance of 950 women superiors general of different cultures, languages, ages, dress, ... allowed us to experience a huge 'we' that encouraged us in the service we share.

Talks, testimonies, listening groups and moments of prayer and liturgy filled the 5 days of the assembly which celebrated 60 years since the founding of the UISG. We began with a vacant See and ended with the 'Habemus Papam' that revolutionised the city of Rome. On Friday morning we celebrated the final mass in the Basilica of St. Mary Major, after crossing the Holy Door of the Jubilee together, and at his tomb, saying a grateful farewell to Pope Francis.

The motto of the assembly resonated in every action: *Consecrated Life, a hope that transforms*. We were invited to be Easter women in a Good Friday world; to become companions of hope in times of loss; to draw the wound in; to clasp the hands of our older sisters in gestures of gratitude and affection, knowing that God is hidden in the smallest of gestures....

It is the time to work at night, we are told, of silence and soft light. And our challenge is to read wisely this time of darkness: to open our eyes to see in the night...

And we remember Dom Pedro Casaldáliga:

' It is late, but it is our time.  
It is late, but it is all the time we have on hand  
to make the future.  
It is late, but we are ourselves, this late hour.  
It is late, but it is dawn  
if we insist a little

We have experienced some very intense days. The passing of Pope Francis and the subsequent conclave took up pages of newspapers, time on the news and social media, and eloquent moments in conversations and in our prayer.

First we were surprised. We were not expecting Francis' death. Or perhaps, we did not want it to happen and clung to one news item or another that spoke of a slow improvement. But the Argentinean Pope died, a pastor close to the people, who embraced the elderly, visited prisoners... and who never ceased to say with gestures and with words, that the centre is best seen from the peripheries... We will not forget his twelve-year pontificate.

Then came the Conclave which very soon gave us as the new pontiff the American-born Augustinian religious Robert Prevost, a missionary in Peru. Pope Leo XIV stepped out onto the balcony in St. Peter's Square, visibly moved, and made his first greeting to an applauding and cheering crowd. His first words and signs have already been widely commented on. The gesture to Leo XIII of *Rerum Novarum*, and the famous phrase of St. Augustine that presents him as a Christian with the believers and a bishop for them, invites us to hope for a good guide for the Church of this time. In the meantime, we will gratefully and confidently accompany him in prayer.

Affectionately.

