

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 170526d

Friday 26.05.2017

Audience with the participants in the 12th General Chapter of the Little Missionary Sisters of Charity (Don Orione)

At 12.30 today, in the Consistory Hall of the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the 12th General Chapter of the Little Missionary Sisters of Charity (Don Orione), taking place in Rome from 1 to 20 May 2017, on the theme: *“To give oneself completely to God, to be completely given to the neighbour! PSMC: missionary disciples, joyful witnesses to charity in the suburbs of the world”*.

The following is the full text of the Pope’s address to those present:

Holy Father’s Address

Dear sisters,

Thank you for this visit during your General Chapter. I would particularly like to thank the Superior General and the advisors. And through you I also greet all the sisters of the Institute, especially those who are weaker and sick. I also greet the Contemplatives of Crucified Jesus and the sight-impaired Sacramentine sisters.

Founded by Don Orione, your institute is called upon to exercise charity towards your neighbour, especially towards the poorest, the abandoned and the excluded, as is well expressed by the theme you chose for this General Chapter: *“To give oneself completely to God, to be completely given to the neighbour! PSMC: missionary disciples, joyful witnesses to charity in the suburbs of the world”*. On behalf of the Church and many poor people, especially women and children, and so many people who suffer physically and psychologically, whom you assist, I thank you for your apostolic work in the various activities of youth ministry, in schools, in homes for the elderly, in the little “Cottolengo” institutes, in catechesis and oratories, with new forms of poverty, and in all places where Divine Providence has placed you.

You are called, and are by vocation, “missionaries”; that is, evangelizers, and at the same time you are at the

service of the poor. Sisters, be missionaries without borders. To all, but especially to the poor, in whom you are called to recognize the flesh of Christ, bring the joy of the Gospel that is Jesus Himself. To all, show the beauty of God's love manifested in the merciful face of Christ. With this beauty fill the hearts of those you encounter. Closeness, encounter, dialogue, and accompaniment are your missionary approach. And do not let yourselves be robbed of the joy of evangelization.

Mission and service to the poor mean you are "outbound", and help you overcome the risks of self-referentiality, of limiting yourselves to survival and self-defensive rigidity (cf. *Evangelii gaudium*, 27, 45). Mission and service make you take on the dynamics of exodus and giving, of coming out of yourselves, of walking and sowing; as well as pastoral conversion, so that all structures are evangelizing and at the service of your charism (cf. *ibid.*, 21, 25.131). For all these purposes, it is vital to nurture communion with the Lord, knowing that your intimacy with Him "is part of a common journey; communion and mission are profoundly interconnected" (*ibid.*, 23); it is never still. In prayer, in communion.

In the Church, mission is born of the encounter with Christ (cf. *Phil* 3: 12-16). The Father's envoy now sends us. It is He Who calls us and sends us. The centre of the Church's mission is Jesus. As His disciples, you are called to be women who work assiduously to transcend, projecting towards the encounter with the Master and the culture in which you live.

The missionary is required to be a bold and creative person. The convenient criterion of "it has always been the case" is not valid. It is not valid. Think of the aims, the structures, the style and the methods of your mission (cf. *EG*, 33). We are living in a time when we need to rethink everything in the light of what the Spirit asks us. This demands a special look at the recipients of the mission and reality itself: the look of Jesus, which is the look of the Good Shepherd; a gaze that does not judge, but which grasps the presence of the Lord in history; a gaze of closeness, to contemplate, to be moved, and to stay with the other as often as necessary; a deep look of faith; a respectful gaze, full of compassion, that heals, frees, and comforts. This special look will make you courageous and creative and will help you always to be in search of new ways to bring the Good News that is Christ to all.

The missionary is also required to be a free person, who lives without anything of his or her own. I never tire of repeating that comfort, lethargy and worldliness are forces that prevent the missionary from "going out", "starting out" and moving on, and ultimately sharing the gift of the Gospel. The missionary can not walk with the heart full of things (comfort), an empty heart (lethargy) or in search of things extraneous to the glory of God (worldliness). The missionary is a person who is free of all these ballasts and chains; a person who lives without anything of his own, only for the Lord and His Gospel; a person who lives on a constant path of personal conversion and works without rest towards pastoral conversion.

The missionary is required to be a person inhabited by the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit Who *reminds* the disciples of all that Jesus said to them (cf. *Jn* 14:16), Who teaches them (cf. *Jn* 16: 14-15), Who bear witness to Jesus and leads the disciples, in turn, to bear witness to Him (Cf. *Jn* 15: 26-27). The missionary is asked to be a person obedient to the Spirit, to follow His movement, the "wind" that pushes towards the most unimagined places to announce the Gospel there. In such obedience, he or she is called to grow continually, to become capable of perceiving the presence of Jesus in so many people discarded by society. You too, dear sisters, be in this sense spiritual people, let yourselves be led, driven and guided by the Spirit.

A missionary is required to have a spirituality based on Christ, the Word of God, and on the liturgy. A "holistic" spirituality, involving the whole person in its various dimensions, based on complementarity, integrating and incorporating. It allows you to be daughters of heaven and daughters of the earth, mystical and prophetic, disciples and witnesses at the same time.

Finally, the missionary is required to be a prophet of mercy. The Year of Consecrated Life came to an end as the extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy began. This path called upon us to clean our eyes and our hearts of indifference so as to welcome and offer to the world, with humility, as servants, the prophecy of mercy, in the likeness of God the Father. Your charism of service to the poor demands that you exercise the prophecy of mercy, that is, to be people centred on God and on the crucified of this world. Let yourselves be provoked by the cry of help from so

many situations of pain and suffering. As prophets of mercy, announce the Father's forgiveness and embrace, a source of joy, serenity and peace (cf. *Misericordiae Vultus*, 2).

Along with the other institutes and movements founded by Don Orione, you form a family. I encourage you to walk the paths of collaboration with all the members of this rich charismatic family. No one in the Church walks "in solitude". Cultivate between you the spirit of encounter, the spirit of family and cooperation.

I conclude by offering to you as an example for your mission and for your service to the poor the icon of the Visitation. Like the Virgin Mary, go on your way, in haste – not the rush of the world, but that of God – and, full of the joy that dwells in your heart, sing your *Magnificat*. Sing the love of God for every creature. Announce to today's men and women that God is love and can fill the heart of those who seek Him and who let themselves be encountered by Him.
