

Dear Sisters, you are all welcome to this house of the Sisters of the Company of Mary.

Let us go through a time of grace during these days of Chapter Assembly. Days in which we will have the opportunity to know and recognize one another, not only as individuals with their history and culture, but above all to recognize one another as sisters, daughters of the same Father-God, daughters of the same father, Blessed Francisco Palau, our founder, followers of the same Lord Jesus, and invited to live the same charism of love made service to the Church.

Starting from this point seems to me fundamental so that everything that is going to happen will have as background music this profound connection, which does not come from the bonds of blood but from the bonds of the Spirit (Cfr. MR 22,20 4º; Cta. 1,5).

As we have prayed for the past six months, we have come here from different parts of the world to hear "your Word", God's Word. Yes, dear sisters, we are one family and as such we are constituted; a family composed of members from different places, different ages, different commitments, but one family and I want to emphasize it, one family "of intense fraternal communion" (Const. 5).

And this, precisely, is what we are going to deal with during this time, the affairs of the family, with the seriousness and commitment that comes from being part of this Body (Cf. Const. 90).

We are going to live days of great intensity, with much work, because the future of the Congregation will depend on what we are able to discern here.

It will be the reflections that will mark our dialogues, discernments and decision making. But before these reflections, during them and even after them, it will be

the contemplative Spirit who dwells in us. I would not like us to reduce contemplation to times of prayer, but I trust that the way of being, of relating, of addressing a word, of sustaining silence... will be trespassed by this breathing, by a heartbeat that makes us look beyond what we see, and listen more deeply than what we hear, and that, by touching, we intuit what lies beyond the surface.

The whole Congregation is represented in us and every sister is intimately connected to this Assembly. There are many sisters who ensure the prayer of intercession during these days and we are all those who, each one from the place that corresponds to her, expect so much from this great event, the most important for the life of the Congregation.

Together with the sisters, we are accompanied by so many people: lay people with whom we share the mission, religious men and women, priests, families, friends... who know how necessary it is for us to listen to the Spirit in order to continue to be a meaningful and credible response to humanity.

Although we have all this wealth of prayer, the development of the Chapter will depend exclusively on the disposition of each one of us present here. Grace is assured (cf. Rom. 12:6); the presence of God is not lacking (cf. Ex. 33:12); but each one of us must do her bit so that the work may be complete.

I would like us all to be of one heart (Cf. Letter 7:2), as our Founder says. This is far from all thinking the same thing, of simply adhering to whatever is proposed. Being one heart has to do with being permanently aware of our belonging to the same Body; each one with her gifts and charisms, with her baggage and her dreams, with the certainty that it is the same God who has brought us here to row together in the same direction, at the breath of the same Spirit and sustained by

the prayer of so many who already live in God and of so many others who continue on pilgrimage on this earth.

One heart, sisters, for can you imagine a body with two hearts? We cannot even think about it; so let us not even think about it for ourselves. Let us all pump so that the vitality we need, the new life that we long for and that our world needs so much, may reach the whole body. May there not be a single member that does not receive a little of blood; may we be able to discover and put in the center those members that need more irrigation, more love, more dedication from each Teresian Carmelite Missionary.

We welcome with joy and gratitude, with the openness of sisters, the presence of Sr. Adriana Montenegro who will accompany us as facilitator throughout these days of the Chapter. She, without a doubt, with the love that characterizes her, will be able to guide the sessions so that God himself becomes present in our dialogues.

We are also grateful for the presence of Sr. Jolanta Kafka, Claretian missionary and former president of the UISG, who will enlighten us during these first days of the Chapter. She, with the generosity that characterizes her, with the depth of her life, will help us to enter into this time of grace with determined determination (Cfr. C 21,2).

How accurate were the words of Pope Francis at the Opening of the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops! He offered us in three images the criteria to follow: to listen in communion, to open ourselves and offer ourselves to others, to broaden our gaze and widen our hearts..., with the certainty that the Lord has the solutions (cf. Jn 14:6). I invite you to reread the entire homily, in the light of our own assembly, without forgetting the historical moment that we as

humanity are going through: "Let us undertake this ecclesial [congregational] journey with our eyes fixed on the world, because the Christian community [our Congregation] is always at the service of humanity, to proclaim the joy of the Gospel to all. Today this is more than ever necessary, especially in this dramatic hour of our history, while the winds of war and the fires of violence continue to devastate entire peoples and nations" (Pope Francis, 02/10/2024).

More than a century and a half ago, in November 1860, from Mahon (Menorca), Father Palau told Gabriel Brunet: "In this departure from Ibiza, I have sought to know my mission. For me, these last days in Palma and Ciudadelá are and will be memorable, because the Lord has deigned to set out for me in a more certain manner the way, my march and my mission" (Cta. 57,2). I would like all of us to have the same experience of discernment and enlightenment at the conclusion of what we are beginning today: to set the way, the march and the mission. To live our prayer and our celebration, our silence and our dialogues, our consensus and dissent, and our final decisions in a family spirit, let us enter the Chapter assembly in a spirit of communion and reconciliation. May God manifest himself openly and may we conclude by affirming, like Palau: 'now we are resolved'. May Mary, the Virgin of the Missionary Carmel, be our guide and accompany all our processes.

Welcome, sisters!