

Official Convocation of the XV General Chapter of the Institute
Daughters of Charity – Servants of the Poor – Canossians

Rome, 8 December 2006
Feast of the Immaculate Conception

Dearest Sisters,

Within the context of the Year of Thanksgiving, in the company of Mary and in this Advent season, the **Immaculate is the dawn of Christmas**. Both feasts speak to us of a self revealing God who despoils Himself of power and assumes humble humanity. With Mary of Nazareth, God's masterpiece, there appears in the world a creature who is nothing but goodness, a hand incapable of striking, a word incapable of hurting, an innocence faced with threats but triumphs, a heart without divisions, a virginity without regrets, a non possessive maternity, a spouse who loves in chastity and total tenderness.

This dream of God fulfilled in Mary is also for us, for our personal sanctity and that of the whole Institute. It is with this desire in my heart that I announce to you the

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XV General Chapter of the Institute
Rome-Ottavia, 5 February - 19 March, 2008

Every Celebration of a General Chapter involves everyone: from the youngest Sister to the oldest Mother, **to return to the sources of our Charism**, where our vocation found its origin, where **our faith is daily nurtured, our sense of belonging** to our Religious Family **is strengthened** and, in whose name, we are **sent to make Jesus known and loved** to our many brothers and sisters, with special attention to the poor.

Every Ecclesial and Family event calls us to **convey** to the world around us, where we live, and to those we are sent, **a look of love and compassion**.

We are also asked, through the power of the Spirit and our openness and availability to Him, to be especially present to history and to contemporary culture, and with our lives, to know how to respond to the deepest aspirations of the men and women of our time.

The last few General Chapters invited us to reflect, deepen and orient our lives along specific values and realities that constitute our life as Consecrated Canossians:

1990-1995 Our Ministries of Charity

1996-2001 Our Fraternal Life in Community

2002-2007 Our Identity: Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Poor.

The coming XV General Chapter will ask us to fix our special attention and commit ourselves to serious reflection on and living the theme:

***“For the sake of Christ, with St. Magdalene
Life of Consecration: the Vows Today”***

This theme obliges us to return to the deepest and most precious fibre of our consecrated Canossian life, we who, in full liberty, have responded to the call to follow Jesus chaste, poor and obedient, in the service of the poor, according to the charismatic modalities of St. Magdalene of Canossa.

With an eye on contemporary history:

The changed historical, social and cultural conditions of the Church and the Institute impels us to re-visit with deep responsibility and commitment, the **quality of our life** for a more **limpid, legible** and **efficacious witness** among our contemporary brothers and sisters.

Today, our **credibility** is founded on the degree of **coherence expressed in our decisions, lifestyle and daily relationships** in **community** and with the **people**. If we really desire to enter into dialogue with all, it is necessary to place ourselves in an **attitude of listening**, to continue to free ourselves from physical and cultural walls, which separate us from them. It is necessary for us to become more **visible** and **transparent** communities, in which one can observe a life style and a way of incarnating, **in our present day**, the **Religious vows** according to the charismatic modalities of our Religious Family. We know for sure that, where this is happening, the Sisters experience how the comments and questions of the “searchers” serve as pointers and stimuli to counteract the “flattening”, and for our search for an ever **deeper evangelical radicality**.

With attention to our present situation:

Often, our numerous tasks and commitments entrusted to us run the risk of creating negative consequences in relation to personal equilibrium and the community dynamics. To broaden the vision, going beyond our boundaries, our works, our community and Institute interests, becomes **an alternative choice**. In other words, it is inevitable that we need to move towards the **re-structuring of our house and works**.

Even more sensitive is the question of **persons**. Communities open to dialogue with people require a rather precise profile. It is impossible to begin a dialogue with outsiders without a **healthy, vital and lively community dynamics**, in which a harmonious inter-generational relationship is established. This calls for a balanced presence of young Sisters, who by nature are open to the new, of senior persons who are capable of carrying the burden of institutional decisions, and of elderly Mothers, bearers of tradition and faithful reference to our roots.

With eyes and hearts full of hope:

Take courage, dearest Sisters, for as long as we are given the grace, our vocation is to work generously with the Risen Christ in this world of ours – where there is poverty of body and spirit, domination and control, manipulation of minds and hearts – and, in them, to serve the Lord till He returns to bring this world to perfection, the world for which He died and was risen.

Our choice to **live chaste, poor and obedient, for the sake of Christ**, brings joy even in the commitment that awaits us, of preparing for the General Chapter, in which we are called to collaborate actively in the research, reflection, sharing and the voting for the delegates to the Provincial and General Chapters.

As part of our tradition,

**the election of the Superior General will take place on the
1st March 2008,
followed the day after by the election of her Councillors.**

Your respective Provincial Superiors will offer you suggestions and helps to solicit your collaboration and commitment at the level of:

▪ **Charismatic reflection**

On our **Life of Consecration**: the Vows of **Chastity, Poverty and Obedience**. You will be asked to reflect and re-read your life experiences, personally and in groups, and to share the light and the shadows that have accompanied your following of Christ in our Religious family.

▪ **Spiritual preparation**

The Provincial Council will be asked to take the initiative to choose the times and modalities of prayer suitable for each situation, to enter with open hearts and spirit to the Project of the Lord, making our ears attentive to His Word and our will prompt to fulfil it in our lives.

▪ **Choice of the Chapter Delegates**

The directives offered by the *Ordinances of the Institute for the Preparation and Celebration of the Provincial Chapter* will be a great help and sure guide for carrying out with responsibility and commitment this act of “participation in the governance of the Institute”.

We know very well, dear Sisters, that beyond all the help we can ask for and obtain in such an important “affair” as this, we will need more than ever **an intense and persevering prayer**. To the **Holy Spirit**, to our **Holy Foundress**, and to **St. Bakhita** and above all, in this year of thanksgiving, let us entrust ourselves **to Mary**, whom we honour today with the beautiful title of the Immaculate Heart; may she guide us on the way of novelty and of evangelical simplicity, and make us passionate for the mission of making Jesus known and loved.

I wish everyone the grace of assuming this “family commitment” with serenity, a sense of belonging and with hearts filled with hope in a future that, certainly, will bring with it the blessings of the Lord and the opportunities of serving Him more and better, above all, in His and our beloved poor.

Together with my Councillors, I thank you for your sisterly collaboration and with the blessings of Mary, may you have a meaningful Advent, in preparation for the Birth of Jesus.

Affectionately in Him,

M. Marie Remedios
Superior General