

From Cana to Capernaum with jars full of new wine

“Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.

After this, he and his mother, [his] brothers, and his disciples went down to Capernaum.”

(Jn 2: 11-12)

Dearest Sisters,

We reach you with joy in this first encounter with the Council to share with you the experience lived together in mutual knowledge and in the beauty of communion. As a new Council Community, we reflected on the commitment entrusted to us by the Chapter Assembly in view of the Program for the six-year term 2022-2027, which we will elaborate in the *plenary* sessions beginning on 24 January 2022 until about the end of March. Thinking of each one of you and of the diversity of the Educating Communities spread in the world, we hope that the Programming can be a fruitful means to implement the choices made by General Chapter XXIV, an opportunity to nourish communion and synodality, revive the missionary daring and creativity that distinguished our Institute since its beginnings.

The biblical icon of the ‘sign’ of Cana helped create a festive atmosphere in the recently concluded GC XXIV. Gratitude, joy, hope echo in our hearts for the lived experience, a real *miracle* for those who know how to look at it with the eyes of faith. The patient waiting for the most suitable conditions to experience the event in presence united us more in the heartfelt prayer that opened new paths for a greater shared and choral reflection. This allowed the Sisters of all the Provinces of the world to be present in Rome in a period still marked by the tragedy of the pandemic.

But the *miracle* went far beyond physical presence. It embraced not only the Chapter members, but all the Educating Communities present with their contribution of reflection during the preparatory phase, with interest in following this great family event, and with the support of prayer.

As in Cana, we felt the presence of Mary in a tangible way. In the chapter hall, the words of Don Bosco rang out, “*Mary is here and she walks in this house.*” In every meeting and in every decision taken, like Her and with Her, we placed ourselves in a listening attitude, to understand what Jesus was saying to us, to respond to the appeals of contemporaneity, and to generate life, above all in the educational mission, and from there, in society, and in the Church.

Experiencing the living presence of Jesus and Mary among us, we reflected on the importance of our presence among young people. With the heart of Main, we welcome the, *I entrust them to you,*

as an act God the Father's trust in us. We renew the awareness of our Marian identity which recognizes Mary as the inspirer, Mother, and educator of our vocation (cf. C 4).

With Mary, Mother of the Church, we feel like the journeying people of God. The concomitance of the General Chapter with the first phase of the XVI Assembly of Bishops' Synod, *For a Synodal Church: communion, participation, and mission*, strengthens in us the desire to seek together the will of God. In GC XXIV we lived an experience of synodality, a laboratory of communion marked by the richness of the interculturality of our Institute: 172 Chapter Members coming from the five Continents, citizens of 97 Countries where the Institute is currently present. Now we feel with greater strength the call to walk together in the heart of contemporaneity, living missionary synodality as a style of life and pastoral action, of animation and government.

In communion with the Church and with creation, the Chapter Assembly questioned itself on how to listen to the cry of the young, the poor, and the earth. This is why it decided to involve the Institute in a more systematic path of conversion to integral ecology, towards new geographical and existential frontiers. Responding to the initiative of Pope Francis, we are invited to register on the *Laudato si' Initiative Platform* and to actively participate with simple and concrete projects. In the person of Mother, the Institute has already provided for registration with the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. Now it is our turn: Provinces, communities, educational works, groups, and associations.

The Chapter Assembly spoke for the whole Institute and thanked Mother Yvonne Reungoat for the long and fruitful years of animation and government. We renew our THANK YOU again for the gift of her life, for her motherly heart and her unconditional dedication, for her broad, profound and encouraging gaze towards a prophetic mission among young people. We express our gratitude to the Sisters who have concluded their service in the General Council: Sr. María Nieves Reboso, Sr. Alaíde Deretti, Sr. María Luisa Miranda, Sr. Maria Helena Moreira, Sr. Vilma Tallone, Sr. Silvia Boullosa, Sr. Lucy Rose Ozhukayil, Sr. Marija Peče, and Sr. Piera Cavaglià, Secretary General. To our thanks, we unite our wish that they will be able to taste the joy of the good wine, which only Jesus gives, in the new mission that awaits them.

An affectionate and heartfelt thank you to Pope Francis, who came to meet us by surprise. We recognize that this visit is a priceless gift for our Institute, a unique and unforgettable historical event. It commits us to the responsibility of living the educational charism today with daring and passion, as a response to emerging challenges and to prepare for a new future. His words remain engraved in our hearts: *"Do not forget the grace of the origins, the humility and littleness of the beginnings that made God's action transparent in the life and message of those who, filled with amazement, began this journey. Mary Help of Christians will help you, you are her daughters."*

The celebration of the General Chapter revived the missionary fire and the desire to reawaken the freshness of the apostolic and vocational fruitfulness of the origins as a response to today. "Now it is time to go down from Cana to Capernaum with Jesus and Mary, to share life and mission together with the young people and the laity, to let God breathe in our existence and courageously face the challenges we will encounter" (*Discourse of Mother at the close of GC XXIV*).

We want to 'be there' among poor young people by listening to their cry more closely. With them and for them, we wish to share the joy and hope of a creative fidelity that enriches the charism with the diverse colors of our cultures.

In the novena in preparation for the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, we renew our gratitude and trust in Mary, invoked by Don Bosco and by Bartolomeo Garelli at the beginning of the Oratory with the prayer of the Hail Mary.

Accompanied by Her, we prepare to live the solemnity of Christmas as a time of grace and new hope for a better future. This is the wish that wants to reach all of you, your families, especially those tried in this time of suffering. A special greeting to the Rector Major, Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime, and to the Salesian Confreres, to the members of the Salesian Family, and to every person, young and adult, who shares the educational service with us all over the world and believes that the miracle that took place in Cana can be realized today as well.

Mary, who guided has the Institute for 150 years, will continue to be present in our post-Chapter journey, in our life, and in the mission She entrusts to us.

Rome, 24 November 2021

Mother and the Council Sisters

New Provincials 2021- 2022

Africa

Province “Our Lady of Peace”
Sr. Cecilia Libokanyo Motanya AFM

Preprovince “Queen of Peace”
Sr. Natália Miguel ANG

Province “St. John Bosco”
Sr. Carolina Ilda Herminio MOZ

America

Province “St. Mary Mazzarello”
Sr. Sara Cecilia Sierra CMM