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Pentecost 2015

Dearest Sisters and Friends,

Peace be with you all on this great feast of Pentecost! And may that peace extend to all those places in the world where our brothers and sisters are suffering because of war, atrocities or natural disasters. May the Spirit of love sent by Jesus be their source of courage and hope.

As the Easter journey of discipleship comes to its fulfilment at Pentecost, we are reminded once again that the Spirit of God is always with us and that we are never alone on our journey of faith. The Spirit abides within us and helps us to speak and live the truth. When we are centred in God, we can hear the Spirit murmuring in rhythm to the beat of our hearts. As with the early disciples, the Spirit gives us courage to speak boldly of God.

Just before his death in 1686, as the feast of Pentecost approached, Nicolas Barré prayed that the Holy Spirit would 'take possession' of the first sisters and that they would 'take possession' of the Holy Spirit. This prayer reaches down through the centuries and includes all those who feel drawn to the spirituality that we have inherited and are committed to living out today. 'Taking possession' of the Holy Spirit means finding a space within ourselves to allow the Holy Spirit to find a home within us. As St Paul says, *'Do you not realize that you are a temple of God with the Spirit of God living in you?'* (1 Cor. 3:16).

God comes to meet us in many different ways. In the person of Jesus it was as the close friend whom the disciples could see and touch, with whom they could share a meal and relate to in heartfelt love and intimacy. Now, since Pentecost, God comes to us in another way that is not limited by space and time, but fully present to everyone, everywhere – always! The Spirit dwells within our hearts and acts from deep within us. So although we never see the Spirit, we do experience movements of the heart that draw us towards God. That is enough to assure us that we 'possess' the Spirit or that the Spirit 'possesses' us.

Led by Nicolas Barré's devotion to the Holy Spirit, which guided the first tentative steps of the Institute, we have always been encouraged to turn to the Holy Spirit to be the source of our inspiration and courage as we responded to God's call. The Book of the Institute states very clearly, *"If we allow the Holy Spirit to take possession of us, the Spirit will gradually bring about the unity of our apostolic lives in which action and contemplation permeate each other"* (no. 14). The 2013 General Chapter document, which sets out our direction for these six years, also reminds us to consciously allow ourselves to be "inspired by God's Spirit" if we are to become "co-creators with God today". If we have the courage to respond wholeheartedly once again to these calls, who knows what wonders the Holy Spirit will bring about through us?

Whenever we open our hearts to receive and our eyes to see, we find that the Spirit is everywhere. We begin to tune into our inner promptings and to ask ourselves, *'Is this a nudge from the Holy Spirit?'* Life takes on a new colour and a new energy. We become free to dance with the Spirit!

Pentecost may be an appropriate time for each of us to ask ourselves, ‘How have I collaborated with God’s Spirit over the past year, or years? With hindsight, can I identify significant spiritual landmarks? Did I identify them at the time or only later? What did those landmarks teach me? How important are they to me now? Pentecost accompanies all aspects of our meandering journey of life. *Do I give sufficient time to silence and prayer in order to recognize the action of the Spirit in my life?*

As we open and stretch our minds and hearts, we begin to identify the promptings of the Holy Spirit in our lives and notice the unfolding of our personal journey to God. We can only do this when we take time out of our busy schedules and enter into the silence of our hearts. Silence can be a demanding presence. It can push us to probe and question many aspects of our lives and may even call us to respond to God in ways that we could never have imagined.

In this year of Consecrated Life and as we look of the Institute in Bangkok in October, we open to the Holy Spirit to open us to all the possibilities offering us. May we enter wholeheartedly into opportunities for renewal and revitalisation so we may recognise the energy and fire within the Holy Spirit really does possess us.

The gift of the Spirit is God’s greatest gift, inviting us into the heart of God and to share in the life of the Trinity. The Spirit is the spark of love that comes to us from the Trinity set us on fire with zeal, hope and joy.

The Holy Spirit continues to bring forth and inspire new disciples in the Christian community. Mary is the first disciple, the model to which all other disciples aspire. Mary is truly a woman of the Spirit. She welcomed and accepted God’s Word so that the Spirit was able to accomplish great things in and through her. She shines out as the perfect example of what the Holy Spirit can accomplish in human persons, if no obstacles are placed in the way of divine action.

The last glimpse we have of Mary in the New Testament is a heartwarming one. We find her in the midst of the apostles, praying with them and receiving the Spirit. As the mother of Jesus she takes her place in the heart of the community of disciples. She is the perfect disciple. She is, as the Eastern Church calls her, the ‘icon of the Spirit’.

As we celebrate Pentecost this year, Kimiko, Maria, Noreen and I assure you of our prayer that God may send his Spirit anew into your hearts. Filled with that Spirit, may we renew our efforts to be a dynamic community of disciples, full of energy and zeal for proclaiming the Gospel. And, as a community, may we give a clear and unmistakable witness to the Truth and Love of God, revealed to us in Jesus our Lord.

May the Holy Spirit be with you all!

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