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PENTECOST 2019

Dearest Sisters and Friends,

The great and joyful feast of Pentecost is approaching and we celebrate it this year just before a very significant event in the life of the Institute: the General Chapter. Let us be united in our prayer that we may be open to how the Holy Spirit chooses to guide us at the General Chapter and in our everyday lives.

In the Gospel of the Mass on Pentecost Sunday (John 20:19-23), we see that Jesus' disciples are living in fear behind locked doors. As companions of Jesus they are afraid they may face arrest or even worse. Suddenly, Jesus is there among them. He gives them the usual Jewish greeting 'Shalom', 'Peace be with you', which can be taken as a wish, or can mean, more truly, 'Peace is with you'. In the presence of Jesus they experience a kind of peace that only he can give – a peace that cannot be found anywhere else and that cannot be taken from them by anyone or anything.

The disciples had locked themselves into an upper room because they were afraid of the authorities. They were also locked inside their own fear, anger, guilt and grief. Jesus broke through it all. He appeared among them and shared with them the first gifts of the resurrection: forgiveness and peace. He commissioned them to share those gifts with others. He sent them out as the Father had sent him.

The peace of the risen Lord, and all the gifts of his Spirit, unlocked the door of the upper room – and also unlocked the disciples' hearts and lives. The peace and joy they have received are immediately communicated to others: Jews and non-Jews, strangers from many countries and people of many different languages. Those gifts were available to everyone. The apostles spoke a universal language at Pentecost: the language of love, peace, forgiveness and hope – the story of God's mighty deeds and the call to discipleship. This call could be heard and understood by everyone; it was a call into a relationship with Christ and with one another. It is no wonder that the disciples, who had earlier been terrified, are now filled with joy.

*We cannot walk the path of
a Christian life without the
Holy Spirit.*

(Pope Francis)

The call to mission follows: 'As the Father sent me, so am I sending you' (Jn 20:21). The baton is being passed. On the feast of Pentecost, the Spirit continues to make Christ ever more present in the world. In their spirit-impelled mission, the followers of Jesus are called to be 'fearlessly open to the workings of the Holy Spirit' (The Joy of the Gospel, 259).

Jesus invites us all to follow him, to identify with him, to take on his attitudes and values, to live as he lived and to share in his mission. We, too, continually encounter Jesus present and alive in

others, especially when we pass beyond what is familiar to us. Listening and learning, we are filled with the Holy Spirit and can become more like Jesus in our own lives.

Bringing peace is central to the mission of Christ's disciples. It is offered to all those who long for peace amid the tragedies and violence that mark human history. Today, more than ever, our societies need 'artisans of peace' who can be messengers and authentic witnesses of God the Father, who wills the good and the happiness of the human family (World Peace Day message 2019). May the Holy Spirit burst into our lives, giving us the energy and desire to share the peace of Christ with all those we encounter in our day-to-day lives.

We are already praying and listening to God's Spirit as we prepare for the forthcoming General Chapter, the theme of which is *Listen! I am sending you on a new path*. It is a time for true discernment as we search together for how God is calling us today in the Institute. Deep listening and openness to God's Spirit will lead us on a new path or perhaps renew our way of walking on our present path. Pope Francis tells us, *'We cannot walk the path of a Christian life without the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our daily companion...a gift from the Father, a gift from Jesus. Let us ask the Lord to give us this awareness that we cannot be Christians without walking with the Holy Spirit, without acting with the Holy Spirit, without letting the Holy Spirit be at the centre of our lives'* (Homily 30 April 2019).



Periods of discernment of God's will and the movements of the Spirit are equally as important now as they were in those early days of the Christian community. For Pope Francis, the gift of discernment has become all the more necessary today. It is not just for extraordinary times. We need it at all times to recognise God's patience and God's timing, which is often not our own. *'There is no greater freedom than that of allowing oneself to be guided by the Holy Spirit, renouncing the attempt to plan and control everything to the last detail, and instead, letting him enlighten, guide and direct us, leading us wherever he wills. The Holy Spirit knows well what is needed in every time and place'* (The Joy of the Gospel, 280).

During this season of Pentecost and throughout the General Chapter we invite each one of our sisters, friends and colleagues to ask the Holy Spirit to lead the delegates, your representatives, on the path to new life and hope for all. We have confidence and trust that Nicolas Barré, too, is interceding for us. Speaking about the Institute just before he died, he assured us, *'I will tell the Holy Spirit that He must always be its source of life.... He must always be at its head to lead it'* (AD 9).



Together with Kimiko, Maria and Noreen, I pray that the Holy Spirit may lead us to become people of peace and awaken us to the hope that burns in our hearts as we are led into the fullness of life and truth.

Maie

on behalf of the General Council.