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Pentecost 2013

Dearest Sisters and Friends,

Loving wishes to you all on the feast of Pentecost!

As we rejoice in the hope and new life coming through the Church at this time may we look forward to the opportunities, blessings and challenges that will come through our General Chapter this year. May the Holy Spirit continue to renew the Institute in and through each one of us as we listen in prayer to how the Lord is calling us in our own situations and at this significant time in the life of our international Institute.

At the recent election of Pope Francis no one could fail to notice the extraordinary life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit. From the moment of his first simple greeting of “Buona sera!” (Good evening) to the people gathered in St. Peter’s Square a breath of fresh air was felt throughout the Church and the world. This excitement and hope has continued to touch us through his words, through his humanity, humility and simplicity and through his genuine love for those most in need in our society. It has truly been an experience of the Holy Spirit breaking through all boundaries and coming to renew the people of God all over the world. “*Send forth your Spirit, O Lord, and renew the face of the earth*” (Ps. 103).

“The mercy of God is always victorious! Let us become agents of this mercy, channels through which God can water the earth, protect all creation and make justice and peace flourish”, was part of the first Easter message given by Pope Francis.

At Pentecost we thank God for the gifts that the Holy Spirit has given to the Church and, in preparation for the Chapter, we are especially aware of the need to pray for the gift of **wisdom**, which is very closely related to the gift of discernment.

Discernment means being attuned to the Holy Spirit. It is an ability to recognise the presence and workings of the Spirit whether in your own life, in the life of another, or in the world. The wisdom of the Spirit can often be found in the most unlikely places and people. Wherever the Spirit is, there is giftedness and wisdom.

Solomon, the embodiment of wisdom in the Old Testament, is portrayed as having a discerning and wise heart and mind (1 Kgs 3:9-12). The wisdom that God bestowed on Solomon was the ability to see things as God sees them: the ability, in other words, to see things as they really are. This was the enlightenment he needed in order to continue his role of righteous judgement among God’s people of Israel, over whom God had appointed him King.

When we live from the centre of wisdom in our hearts, we can no longer live only for ourselves, for wisdom is the golden thread that binds heart to heart, and reminds us moment by moment that in the heart of God we are all one, and each one is uniquely cherished.

Experience is the seed of wisdom, and we all have experience. No one is excluded from the ‘university of life’, where heart-wisdom, not head-knowledge, is learned. The seeds of wisdom that the Holy Spirit and life itself sows in our hearts and memories need to be cared for, watered, and nurtured. We do this when we take time to reflect on our experiences in prayer and listen to how the Holy Spirit is urging us to respond and act. As spiritual people we grow under the influence of the Spirit so that eventually it is the Spirit who is the source of our activities.

“We are called to become instruments of the Holy Spirit who is at work in us, in the people to whom we are sent and in their history” (B.I. 7) . Our whole life as Christians involves discerning the Spirit at work in our human history and in all of creation, becoming aligned with it, and letting it be the deepest source from within which our own lives take shape and form. Once we become aware of the Holy Spirit, that intense divine presence, our lives begin to change, and so does the way we see the world. Our sense of wonder grows. Our hope becomes more secure. We find ourselves capable of loving in ways we could never have imagined. We expand our vision. As the prophet Isaiah reminds us, we widen the space of our tents (Is. 54:2, cf CA doc. 2007).

Pentecost is the coming of the Spirit of Jesus into the world. It is the celebration of God breaking through the boundaries of time and space and opening the whole of our being to the re-creating power of love. Pentecost is freedom – the freedom of the Spirit to blow where it wishes. We rejoice in the freedom we are offered while we acknowledge the choice and responsibility that comes with it. Freedom *in* the Spirit means freedom *by* the Spirit. It means that we have gladly and joyfully assumed our commitment to follow Christ, which is so total that we can only declare: *“It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me!” (Gal 2:20)*. It is this total commitment to God that grants us the only real and genuine freedom we can know.

Pentecost is also a time of empowering. Each individual human being can claim the Spirit of Jesus as the guiding spirit of his or her life. In that spirit we can speak and act freely and confidently with the knowledge that the same Spirit that inspired Jesus is inspiring us.

Let us remain open to the newness that God wants to bring into our lives through the forthcoming General Chapter. Let us not be afraid of God’s surprises! May we not only receive the gifts of the Spirit, especially the gift of wisdom, but also allow the Spirit to surprise us and to bear fruit within and among us.

Masako and Marie Agnès join me in wishing you a prayerful and Spirit-filled Pentecost,

Marie

Send forth your Spirit, O Lord
Renew the face of the earth!