

"Our Lady of Sorrows"



Summary:

Page 2 HAPPY FEAST OF OUR LADY OF SORROWS - *Rosanna Imamura Intern. President-Coord. ALC*

Page 3 LET US ALL MEET IN HER HEART - *Sr. Annamaria Babbini, Congregational Leader*

Page 4 FEAST OF OUR LADY OF SORROWS - *Fr. Carlo Bittante Fdc, Congregational Leader*

Page 5 LET US JOURNEY TOGETHER - *Sr. Liliana Ugoletti*

Page 8 MY DEAR LADY - *Adele Cattari*

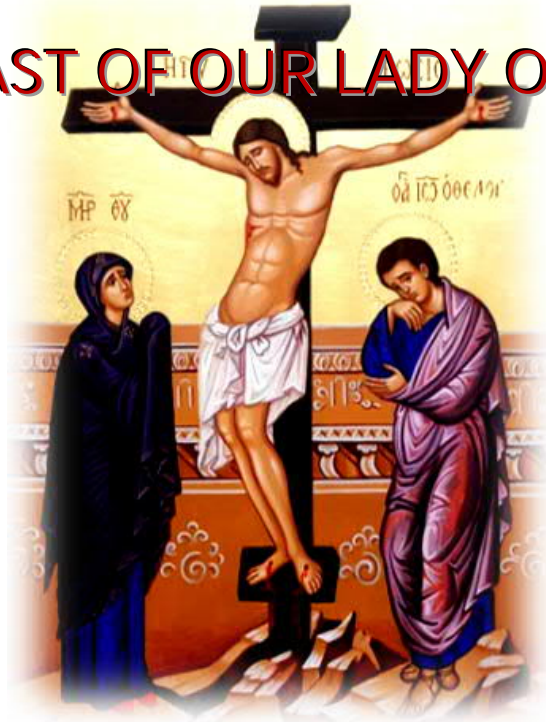
Page 10 VICTIMS OF THE THROWAWAY CULTURE - *Pope Francis*

Page 12 CONFORMITY WITH THE GREAT MODELS - *Elda Pollonara*

Page 14 CANOSSIAN SISTERS - HONG KONG - *Fr. Gianni Criveller, Pime*

Page 17 CHARISMATIC FAMILIES - *Lay Canossians*

HAPPY FEAST OF OUR LADY OF SORROWS



"Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows, is constituted Mother of Charity under the Cross, when, at the words of her dying Divine Son, she gathered all of us, sinners though we are, to her heart".

Magdalene of Canossa

Looking at the history of our Foundress and her relationship with the Virgin Mary, one discovers an experience of Marian life lived in depth, in the most authentic, tender and filial love for Our Lady of Sorrows, whom she chooses to console with the holiness of her life.

Saint Magdalene loves Mary intensely with a filial, deep and attentive love, because she has lived the personal experience of one who has made room for the Virgin in her home, in her heart.

Magdalene's Marian devotion highlights the motherhood of the Virgin: she is the Mother of the Greatest Love, the Mother of the Church, the Mother of suffering humanity, the Mother of each of us.

At the foot of the Cross, where a sword of pain pierced Mary's heart, Jesus gave us His Mother just before He died.

"Woman, this is your son."

Then to the disciple He said: "This is your mother."

And from that moment the disciple made a place for her in his home.

Jn 19: 26-27

May each of us, following the example of the beloved disciple, welcome Mary into his/her home and into his/her heart. Let us try to console her for the pains caused by those still crucified today and to prevent sins. Then we can say: "Yes, she is my mother; Lord Jesus, teach me to love her as you love her."

HAPPY FEAST OF OUR LADY OF SORROWS

Rosanna Imamura,
President – International Coordinator ALC

"Let us all meet in her heart of a Mother"



To all of you, Lay Canossians,

My warm greetings and best wishes to you and your families on the occasion of OUR FEAST, which celebrates the great gift that Jesus left us from the cross: His Mother. "Behold your Mother" (Jn 19:26-27) and she opened her heart to everyone and to all humanity.

Let us thank Him for having given us Mary, for her unceasing presence in our lives, in our families, in our homes. She watches over us and protects us, always ready to support and guide us.

Let us learn from her to love in moments of joy and suffering, to be consolation, closeness and solicitous bearers of unity and brotherhood wherever we are in the world.

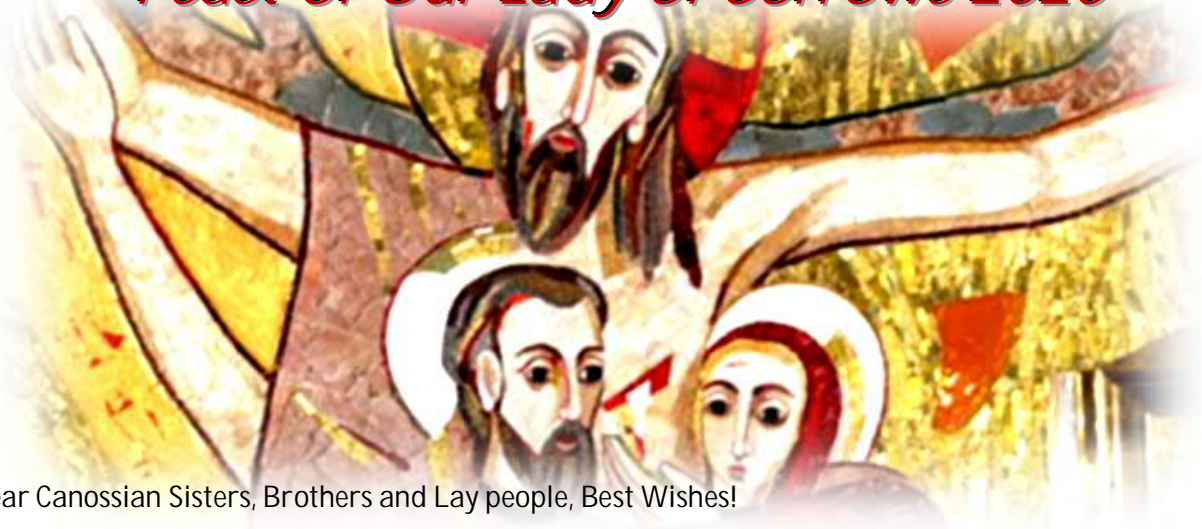
We have received the gift of Jesus' Mother, let us speak of her maternal love to those we encounter, to our sisters and brothers who are close to us, and she will show us how to make her Son Jesus known so that He may be loved.

HOLY CELEBRATION

"Let us all meet in her heart of a Mother"

M. Anna Maria Babbini FdCC
Superior General

Message to the Canossian Family Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows 2020



Dear Canossian Sisters, Brothers and Lay people, Best Wishes!

This celebration, so important for us, happens at a time of crisis for the whole world, caused by Covid-19 with devastating effects not only on human victims but also concerning economic and social spheres. Consequently, some of our visible forms of affection for Mary, such as meetings and celebrations, will be limited, but we will certainly find creative ways to honour Mary. This feast can become a unique occasion to better ponder certain aspects or values that Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows, the Mother of Charity and the true Foundress of the Institute, offer us.

Mary, at the foot of the Cross, is the mother who cannot abandon her son in the most difficult, painful and tragic moments of his life; she is the disciple who cries, walks the Way of the Cross to Calvary and there she is tested, indeed she grows in her faith. She seeks to capture God's mysterious way and contemplate the depths of her Son's love for sinful and unfaithful humanity. Pope John Paul II in *Redemptoris Mater* n. 18 says, "At the foot of the Cross Mary shares through faith in the shocking mystery of this self-emptying. This is perhaps the deepest "kenosis" of faith in human history."

At the foot of the cross, Mary is given as mother to John, the disciple loved by Jesus, to the Church and to each of us. And John Paul II says again at n. 23, "And so this "new motherhood of Mary," generated by faith, is the fruit of the "new" love which came to definitive maturity in her at the foot of the Cross, through her sharing in the redemptive love of her Son."

Like Magdalene, all of us in the Canossian Family see in Mary not only our mother, but an inspiration, an example, our Foundress, the one who teaches us to assimilate the true spirit of the institute. In fact, our Rule of Life at n. 25 says, "Like Mary, we remain at the foot of the Cross to receive the seal in our heart of the boundless generosity of the Crucified One, and to live it anew in every moment of our life."

Standing at the foot of the Cross with Mary in this time of pandemic means not only contemplating Christ and His "most generous love" but also being close with our hearts to the crucified ones of today, overcoming the "distance" caused by fear and indifference. It means giving oneself generously in service, it means seeing beyond the present with hope and faith as Pope Francis often invites us to do.

This is my wish and prayer for all of you.

Fr. Carlo Bittante, Superior General FdC



Let us Journey Together in Fraternity

The question usually causes a certain "suspense" which leads us back to the theme: "Evangelical Fraternity: Utopia or Prophecy?", with the stubbornness of one who does not wish to know more. In the initial experience of the Christian community, no one spoke of theology of fraternity, none insisted on studying the dynamics of relationships, much less on serious treatises on the pedagogy of fraternal encouragement of special life styles. A "tutor" was present among the Twelve, like us today who love to say: Jesus Christ, the One who inspires evangelical fraternity: "I am with you always..." (Mt 28:20)



are a prophet of fraternal love, but busy yourself to silence your conscience. Jesus enters into this unusual fraternity, in this unique company of persons and, with His divine touch, creates a bond that makes us truly a community.

Jesus Christ, Crucified and Risen, is the heart of our community. Illusion, dream. Utopia? Prophecy? Thanks to Easter, thanks to the Spirit and His gift of faith, the community lives the evangelical fraternity and experiences the taste of peace and joy, becoming the guardian of the Word and the interpreter of Promises.

It is the Easter proclamation! Jesus enters into our lives, into the life of every man and woman, without distinction. He identifies with every person who daily follows after you and risks annoying you, with the poor who knocks to your door and causes you to be indifferent, with the mother who, with her little one, does not know where to spend the night... with you who think that you



If fraternity is prophecy, what consequences can this have on the harmonious and positive growth of the whole of humanity, beginning from our little circle and enlarging itself beyond measure throughout the world? The words of Luke can help us: "My Mother and my brothers are those who hear the Word of God and put it into practice!" (Lc8:21) and Paul says: "For we are

ambassadors of Christ... ." (2Cor 5,20)

Prophecy corresponds to a unique preoccupation: feeling ourselves drawn tirelessly to serve our most needy brothers and sisters, the poorest, those within and outside our community, to obey the mandate of the Lord and to let that energy coming from the zeal for souls, to spring forth and generate life. Religious and Laity, consecrated or otherwise, we are all called to go beyond, so that the Canossian mission may be clothed with solidarity and fraternal collaboration, break barriers, encourage circulation of gifts and synergy, recuperate in our lives that "more" that unite the individual to the community.



Utopia? No! Even if transformation into Prophecy is a complex process, at time difficult, because it demands concrete commitment, it brings out your diversity and uniqueness: "male and female, He created them," (Gn 1:27) so as to better reflect the face of God, to recompose faithfully the huge and universal mosaic of the "Son Crucified and Risen."

Fraternity and Prophecy: they stare at us, invite us to risk if we wish to be more incisive rather than just theoretical. What we have contemplate in Christ, in Mary most Sorrowful beneath the Cross, and in the first community of the Apostles and the experience of the one Family, in one Charism which we ourselves would like to re-express in a society like ours, deprived of memories, ideals, prospects, to manifest that interior joy is possible and lasting when communion springs forth, from the respectful capacity of identifying ourselves in the individual events.

Evangelical fraternity is by its very nature a shared life that transcends the human condition, a continuous becoming, a drawing

closer to our true identity as children of God, as brothers and sisters who aim at the same goal, without nostalgia, unhurried. An extended hand seeking for help, a lost look deprived of direction, a snuffed out smile on a child's lips... they are instantaneous events of the present moment that can be coloured with hope if they can experience

fraternity.

To speak together of love, to participate together is already happiness: it is already strength that helps to unmask fears, heal traumas, and to resist the wish to escape. To meet each other fraternally is to encourage mutually, to be reconciled, to walk together in mutual trust that beyond our little reality, there is an infinite light.

And you, brother, sister, are you convinced that the most effective way to continue the journey of life is that of Evangelical Fraternity?

Let us journey together: Profile of Hope

Hope is the "miracle" of an ordinary history of those who know how to overcome obstacles and dream of obtaining necessary things of which too many speak about, but no one lift a finger.

Hope helps us to smoothen the corners of division, unravel disturbing circumstances, fill empty interior and exterior emptiness generated by injustice that mortifies and offends. To hope is to show that reasoning makes sense, finds deep meaning in "faith",

because it brings you, like the Apostles to witness, with great courage, to the Resurrection.

Reality is so much greater and more complex than our possibilities: each day, we make our own experience. To accept it in its concreteness is a sign of far-sightedness and availability to the future, to what life will continue to be: different, positive, better... God, the great compassionate and merciful One, transforms hope into "promises of salvation"; it is a sure support for overcoming fears, egoism, sufferings, calming irritated and reactive persons.

Hope is not confused with curiosity, that seek to know what our future will be or with the search for "cautious signs", or further, with dreams of undertaking great enterprises that can make us famous. We cannot be playing with life and much less can we be indifferent to how we are building our present history, the promise of tomorrow. It affects our lives, our interiority, our availability to collaborate, avoiding being partial.

It is more and more a commitment to meet, to exchange, even to discuss and clarify, but, above all, a capacity to be involved on the part of those who can forget themselves and be affected by other happenings.

Example and witness are in themselves lessons in bearing up with small or big injustices, abuses, is not succumbing to blackmail, to understand that hatred and revenge are not effective arms: it is in serene co-existence that we can obtain much, because the other is not only and always someone different.

Looking at the little gestures of daily life, it is possible to become aware that all of us, without distinction, are essentially "persons".

Reality forces us to keep our feet on the ground, but the courage to look beyond leads us to that story that has in itself the breath of true liberty, of warmth and of light.

But we? We believers? We are called to give response where the journey intersects with conflicting experiences of successes and failures, of welcomes and rejections, of enthusiasm and discouragements, of fulfilment and of natural calamities... do we succeed to perceive in hope that shining ray that crosses the horizon of fraternity, convincing us that all of us: family or otherwise, fellow citizens or foreigner, those in our circle and those outside are proceeding in the same direction and we are fellow travelling companions?

M. Lilibiana Ugoletti



“... my dear Lady”

In Don Luigi Libera's time, one can see the Marian devotion blossoming in Magdalene's heart like a spontaneous flower: Our Lady has always been her refuge, her help, her protector, her confidant, her intermediary to God. Magdalene turns to Her with such unlimited trust that she once asked herself the question if, by chance, doing so would not break the laws of orthodoxy. Let us remember the reassuring answer of the wise director:

“My Daughter, continue to grow ever more deeply in your devotion and affection towards the Virgin Mary, with regard to your particular needs and for the present calamity, because every day she gives us proofs and indisputable evidence of her protection and love. Do not be afraid it will diminish your affection for God from whom comes everything good, because it pleases him to give us every good thing through the intercession of Mary, so that we truly love her, honour her with all reverence, imitate her as it is given to us, poor miserable creatures to do.” (July 14, 1796)

And it is precisely on the theme of imitation that he places the emphasis:

“Let us imitate her, my Daughter, in that purity of heart... so we endeavour... to please God... her great humility... with holy confidence, inspite of the knowledge of our nothingness... Humility which keeps us subject to the Divine Will in all circumstances... .” (July 14, 1796)

Well: it is precisely in the line of Christian appropriation of the Virgin Mother's virtues and, in particular, of her willingness to God's designs that Magdalene's Marian devotion is consolidated and grows.

“In Mary every act converges towards the Gift of self to the Will of the Heavenly Father; the

same must be for the Daughters of Charity; every action must be directed in an affectionate participation or spiritual 'company' with the Mother of the Lord.” (PICCARI, Sola... p. 88)

Devotion to Mary, understood in this way, does not really remain an end in itself, but becomes a ladder to ascend to God and to concentrate in Him alone all the affective and operative potential of the Christian person seen as a whole....

Magdalene knows no other perspective and no other language: to love God above all things, to empty one's heart of every sensitive affection so that it can contain no one but Him, to make her own His Will, as Jesus did, contemplated in Mary and given by Her to humanity.

It is in the mystery of the Passion and Death of the Lord that her Mother reaches the summit of oblation love, and it is in this mystery of love and pain that Magdalene of Canossa necessarily feels involved. "Necessarily", because, placing at the centre of her spirituality the loving contemplation and imitation of the Crucified One, and implanting on them the Rules, she spontaneously offers herself to the Cross.

Just as the passion of the Son could not fail to be shared by a Mother like Mary, uniquely and totally given to Him, so too the mystery of the Cross cannot fail to be shared by those who have chosen to carry the Crucified One in their hearts. And since alongside Jesus on the cross "stands" His Mother, love and devotion to the Crucified One embrace both inseparably.

We reaffirm the evolution in Magdalene's Marian devotion: from a generic piety towards Mary, to a specific devotion to the Mother of Sorrows.

And just as devotion to the Crucified



One was not born from external influences, but from experiences lived in depth, so was devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows. So Fr. Piccari writes:

"Magdalene orients herself towards Golgotha with suffering. Baby girl, she cries the absence of her father and the abandonment of her mother; innocent and naive, she suffers misunderstandings and incomprehension, even from servants. Young, when she moves in search of a state of life, she experiences disappointments and derisions; she suffers infirmity in her body and contrasts in her projects; the support she receives comes after obstacles of all kinds; and when the consent to her "idea" seems to take the form of serious agreements, the most unthought out impediments arise. Once she was an adult, she no longer has to deal with punishment: open hostility... Wars, famine, cholera are the most serious calamities she encounters, one after the other, or one with the other, on the way to Golgotha. The fruits of her work proceed from the good, sown among the tears and grown among the thorns." (PICCARI, Sola... p. 89)

We know, however, from which more acute and mysterious roots Magdalene felt herself penetrate into the depths of her being: the mystical experience of "desolation" with its recurring painful purifications, lived in unconditional surrender to the Will of God, like Mary at the foot of the cross, led Magdalene to see in Mary "Desolate" her term of comparison, the mirror in which to verify her conformity to the Crucified One.

But on Calvary Mary is also the one who, by the will of her dying Son, opens her heart to universal motherhood.

Magdalene sinks into it with all her affective energy and finds everything there: understanding and help, advice and comfort,

Adele Cattari,
Maddalena Gabriella di Canossa, Chapter II

tenderness and goodness, courage and perseverance, forgiveness and joy; she finds there above all access to the Heart of God which is revealed to her in the Son.

Her soul is so overflowing that she cannot keep the wealth of her maternal favours to herself alone, and the daughters, girls, young women and women participate in them who, poor and humble, who frequent many of the houses of the Institute.

By recommending and teaching the devotion of the Rosary and the Chaplet of Our Lady of Sorrows, she emphasizes the value of meditation on the contemplated mystery:

"To make easy for the girls to be able to meditate, the Sisters should accustom them little by little to making short but simple considerations on the Mysteries of the Most Holy Rosary ... This is also an efficacious means for a change of conduct." (UR p. 135)

Her enthusiasm for Mary is known to all: no one is unaware to whom Magdalene turns in her and the Works's various needs:

"Mary Most Holy is all heart for us, her daughters. Through her we can obtain from God every grace." (From the Exhortation for the month of May, A.C.R.)

"... but our Most Holy Mother will do everything herself, and the more we are deprived of human means, the more we have to hope that everything will go on well."

(Ep. III/1, Letter 1107 to Elena Bernardi)

"Mary Most Holy is the One who straightens out everything in our Houses, which are entirely Hers." (Ep. III/1, Letter 1159 to Angela Bragato)

"Whoever leans on my dear Lady obtains all that she wants."

(Ep. III/1, Letter 1045 to Elena Bernardi)





Psalm 145 reminds us that the Lord upholds the stranger as well as the widow and the orphan among his people. The Psalmist makes explicit mention of those persons who are especially vulnerable, often forgotten and subject to oppression. The Lord has a particular concern for foreigners, widows and orphans, for they are without rights, excluded and marginalized. This is why God tells the Israelites to give them special care.

In the Book of Exodus, the Lord warns his people not to mistreat in any way widows and orphans, for He hears their cry (cf. 22:23). Deuteronomy sounds the same warning twice (cf. 24:17; 27:19), and includes strangers among this group requiring protection. The reason for that warning is explained clearly in the same book: the God of Israel is the One who "executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing" (10:18). This loving care for the less privileged is presented as a characteristic trait of the God of Israel and is likewise required, as a moral duty, of all those who would belong to His people.

That is why we must pay special attention to the strangers in our midst as well as to widows, orphans and all the outcasts of our time. In the Message for this 105th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, the theme "It is not Just about Migrants" is repeated as a refrain. And rightly so: "it is not only about foreigners"; it is about all those in existential peripheries who, together with migrants and refugees, are victims of the throwaway culture. The Lord calls us to practise charity towards them.



He calls us to restore their humanity, as well as our own, and to leave no one behind.

Along with the exercise of charity, the Lord also invites us to think about the injustices that cause exclusion, and in particular the privileges of the few, who, in order to preserve their status, act to the detriment of the many. "Today's world is increasingly becoming more elitist and

cruel towards the excluded”: this is a painful truth. Developing countries continue to be drained of their best natural and human resources for the benefit of a few privileged markets. Wars only affect some regions of the world, yet weapons of war are produced and sold in other regions which are then unwilling to take in the refugees generated by these conflicts. Those who pay the price are always the little ones, the poor, the most vulnerable, who are prevented from sitting at the table and are left with the ‘crumbs’ of the banquet”.....

For today too, the “culture of comfort... makes us think only of ourselves, makes us insensitive to the cries of other people... which results in indifference to others; indeed, it even leads to the globalization of indifference.”



Yet, as Christians, we cannot be indifferent to the tragedy of old and new forms of poverty, to the bleak isolation, contempt and discrimination experienced by those who do not belong to “our” group. We cannot remain insensitive, our hearts deadened, before the misery of so

many innocent people. We must not fail to weep. We must not fail to respond. Let us ask the Lord for the grace of tears, the tears that can convert our hearts before such sins.....

Loving our neighbour means feeling compassion for the sufferings of our brothers and sisters, drawing close to them, touching their sores and sharing their stories, and thus manifesting concretely God’s tender love for them. This means being a neighbour to all those who are



mistreated and abandoned on the streets of our world, soothing their wounds and bringing them to the nearest shelter, where their needs can be met.



Today we also need a mother. So we entrust to the maternal love of Mary, Our Lady of the Way, of so many painful journeys, all migrants and refugees, together with those who live on the peripheries of our world and those who have chosen to share their journey.

Pope Francis

CONFORMITY WITH THE GREAT MODELS

"It is necessary to animate our spirit and more than ever to conform ourselves in all things to those great models: Jesus Crucified and Our Lady of Sorrows."

Ep. III/1, Letter 1000 to Elena Bernardi



To conform ourselves to Christ means to go out of self to become Him. This does not mean to annihilate our identity in God, but to find it again in its fullness, because we are never so much our true selves as when we abandon or surrender ourselves to God, the Creator and Redeemer.

He is the One who preserves in Himself the core of our identity and knows perfectly the laws of development of our full maturity.

All creatures are truly themselves in as much as they remain or become as God has thought and willed them to be.

If the sea wished to become air, it would lose its identity. If the flower wished to become a bird, it, too, would lose its identity.

To be and to remain what God wishes it to be is for every creature to affirm its own identity. However, unlike all other creatures, man is a being destined by God to transcend himself.

His identity is realized in his becoming what God has thought of him.

God is not jealous of His own greatness. God transcends all creatures and is also the One who calls man to become like Him.

This is the final destiny of man. God has no other plan than this for man.

Man can decide on another destiny for himself, but acting in this way he always chooses death. God has created man in His image and likeness (cf Gn 1:26). To be an image of something or someone is to represent more or less exactly the reality of that thing or person.

I am the image of God.

He has created me as a reflection, a visible and sensitive radiation of Himself, an expression of His power and His glory.

I am but a fragment of His unfathomable mystery in the world.

But this "image" is endowed with intelligence and a free will. Man can freely deform the original image of God. And such a deformation is not only a probable hypothesis, but it has been and it is a reality. Sin entered into our world, changed it and disfigured the image of God.

No man would have been able to restore such an image and give back to man the likeness of His Creator.

Only God in His Love was able to invent the way of restoring to man his lost dignity and beauty. He resolves to send into the world His only begotten Son, the perfect image of the substance of the Father:

He is the image of the unseen God
and the first born of all creation,
for in Him were created all things. (Col 1:15)

The Word took flesh in the womb of the Virgin of Nazareth and became like man in everything.

Christ is the new man.
Mary is the new woman, the channel of grace,
the way of entry for the Word and the way to return to God in Christ Jesus.

Man finds again in these two creatures, given by the goodness of the Father, the models to become again what God had always willed man to be.

The path of conforming to Christ and Mary passes through the Cross.

Man becomes like Christ and Mary when he receives the Word that purifies him and introduces him into the mystery of His death and resurrection.

Called to communion with the Son of God, (1 Cor 1:9)
"we are being changed into His likeness from one degree of glory to another;
for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." (2 Cor 3:18)



Elda Pollonara,
The path of identification with Christ Crucified

Canossian Sisters, the strength of women in Hong Kong



Among the thousands of events cancelled by the pandemic, there is also that, although apparently minor, of the 160th Anniversary of the arrival of the Canossian missionaries in Hong Kong on April 12, 1860, just two years after the arrival of the missionaries from Milan (today PIME). What the Canossians have done in favour of the emancipation, protection and promotion of children, girls and women is unthinkable.

The Italian consul in Hong Kong and Macau, Clemente Contestabile, aware of the fundamental contribution of the Italian Sisters for the development of the society, would have wanted to mark the Anniversary with an event. It was not possible. He wrote a beautiful letter to the South China Morning Post stating that the six Sisters "were young, brave and capable". With the strength of their faith and determination, the young Italian women brought hope and relief to many people, "facing epidemics, natural disasters and numerous social challenges". The Canossian Sisters, still present in Hong Kong and Macao, are largely Chinese and have become one of the most prestigious educational institutions in the two Chinese cities.

The Canossian Sisters wrenched thousands of little girls from death and trained generations of young women who then made an impact on the history of the city in all sectors: religious, social, cultural, business, political.

With Canossa Hospital they offered excellent health care. The Italian community, and in particular the missionaries Fathers of PIME, loved and appreciated this place, where one felt not only well cared for but also at home. In particular I would like to remember Sister Giuseppina Gamba (Sister Jo for everyone), who for decades welcomed us with care and kindness at the hospital reception.

The Canossian Sisters were the first Italian women to settle in Hong Kong. The Daughters of Charity (their formal name), founded in Verona in 1808 by the Marchioness Magdalene of Canossa, soon spread throughout the regions of Veneto and Lombardy, promoting the education of girls and poor young women.

In 1860, on the initiative of the missionary Fathers in Milan, six young Sisters were sent to Hong Kong. Among them were a Sister from Brescia Lucia Cupis (1820-1870) and one from

Milan Maria Stella (1832-1917), the first two Superiors. They arrived in Hong Kong on April 12, 1860, after a long and difficult journey in the company of Fr. Giuseppe Burghignoli.

The first Sisters who came to Hong Kong were women of great courage and devotion, they were able to do exceptional things, leaving an indelible mark on the history of the city.



It was the first missionary expedition of the Canossian Sisters outside Italy and, therefore, lived with great participation and anxiety by the Congregation and the small mission in Hong Kong. A few hours after their arrival, young Emily Bowring, the beloved daughter of the Fourth Governor of Hong Kong, one of the most admired women in the Colony, made the sensational decision to become a Canossian Sister. She was admitted 15 days later. Emily had already upset her family and her environment by converting to Catholicism a few years earlier.

On May 1, 1860, 17 days after their arrival, the Italian Convent School in Caine Road (now Sacred Heart Canossian College) was inaugurated, the first Canossian and Italian school in Hong Kong, with Emily Bowring as its first Director. On May 10, with the help of two young Chinese women, the Chinese Pui Ching school began. In less than a month from their arrival, three memorable events marked the start of the Canossian mission in Hong Kong.

The Canossian community became a centre of educational, social and evangelizing activities in continuous development. A hostel was founded for European girls, an orphanage for small children, the work of the Holy Childhood, a small hospital, a house for disabled people and a catechumenate. In 1880 they opened a school for poor children in Kowloon and other activities for young people and poor families.

In 1868 Sr. Luigia Cupis, with five companions from Hong Kong, opened a new foundation in Wuhan in Hubei (and later also in the Provinces of Shaanxi and Henan), amid severe hardship and difficulty. In 1874, the Canossian Sisters also settled in Macao. Hundreds of Canossians came to Hong Kong, Macao and China to work in education, evangelization and care for orphans and the sick. Other missions, also from Hong Kong, were opened on the Island of Timor, in India, Singapore and Malacca.

These achievements were possible thanks to the strong personality of the missionaries, animated by exceptional faith and determination. Many of them paid with death at a young age for their efforts and the dangers they faced. The first was Giovanna Scotti, part of the first expedition, who died when she was only 29 years old. Epidemics, natural disasters, shipwrecks, persecutions, misunderstandings even from ecclesiastical superiors marked their difficult and exciting experience.

In Summer 1870, the two women who had the most influence on the early Canossian life in Hong Kong, Superior Lucia Cupis and young Emily Bowring, who was only 37 years old, died a short distance from one another. They were two women with strong personalities, who

understood and loved each other, even though they came from such different backgrounds. Sister Cupis, 50, died considered by all to be a saint.

Many Chinese girls and women were part of the Canossian community, generally as tertiaries, that is unmarried women who dedicated themselves totally to the Canossian mission without public religious vows. From this group, the first local women's Congregation in Hong Kong, the Sisters of the Precious Blood, founded in 1922 and to this day is the largest in Hong Kong.

In April 1929, under the responsibility of Sr. Teresa Pera from Turin (1870-1938), a woman with a strong personality, the Canossa Hospital was founded. The building was destroyed during the Second World War and the present structure was inaugurated in 1960. Since 1991 the hospital, which has had a large number of Italians among patients and service staff, has been under the responsibility of Caritas Hong Kong, without changing its prestigious name.

In April 1934, Archbishop Mario Zanin, Apostolic Delegate to China, visited Hong Kong and was received with all honours at the Sacred Heart School, the most prestigious of the Canossian schools.

A 14-year-old girl, although not Christian, was chosen to present the bouquet of flowers to the illustrious guest. All her life she remembered this privilege with pride. Years later she took refuge in China because of the Japanese invasion. She was widowed with small children and became a Catholic, and one of her children entered the seminary. Now he is Cardinal John Tong, Apostolic Administrator of Hong Kong. This simple episode, which I love to remember here, was told to me by the Cardinal himself.

Between 1947 and 1951 most of the Canossian Sisters, expelled from China, were received in Hong Kong and Macao. Education became the most urgent necessity for the large number of young people and refugees, due to the destruction and misery brought by the war. The Canossian Sisters founded more than 20 new schools, giving special priority to girls from poor families.

There are few Italian Sisters among the Canossian women now. Among them is Sister Anna Viganò, who for decades has been the soul of the Italian community that meets on Sundays at the chapel of the Sacred Heart School, in Caine Road, not far from the Cathedral.



Fr. Gianni Criveller, Pime



Charismatic Families

Where do our Founders and Foundresses come from? What are the experiences that have overwhelmed them, overturned them, transformed them? Who did they fall madly in love with? The vast majority of them were lay and secular people..., others were priests. Every Founder or Foundress carries a "it involves more" in her heart. To approach this "it involves more" experience of the Founders and Foundresses, authentic lovers of Jesus in such different ways, is to perceive the creativity of love. The creativity of charity has no limits. There is an "it involves more" in Founders and Foundresses, in each one of them different but convergent and integral to the Person of Jesus and His mission in the Spirit received from the Father. This "it involves more" within the hearts of the Founders and Foundresses reveals a special luminosity of the Face of Christ and encourages us to identify ourselves in these currents of life in the Spirit. In Charismatic Families, we are called to know, love and witness to the Spirit that is communicated to us through the Founders and Foundresses. That "it involves more" enriches us so much, in relation to Christ, to the Church and to our own Charism.

The driving force, in the Charismatic Family, is love for one's own charism, love for the Church, love for Christ, love for the recipients of one's own charism. Today, the media is an instrumental mediation for communication among us, for formation, to increase the common commitment, to witness, to spread the message... to pass on passion, enthusiasm, signs of life, love, charity, mercy, kindness, goodness, solidarity, dedication, collaboration and shared mission,

peace, brightness, joy... And all these signs must, above all, be personalized around the person of Jesus, the Beloved Son to be listened to and followed... In Christ Jesus, God the Father will be forever a part of the history of humanity as He who is present, near, provident, holy and merciful.

Among religious, priests and lay people who share the same charism there is a relationship of complementarity, not subordination. The different charisms, lived as Charismatic Families, become luminous signs of evangelical novelty and creative fidelity in facing the new times, in accordance with their own identity. Living the same charism, in holy emulation, involves feeling called by the Lord to grow as brothers and sisters, to be formed and committed according to one's state of life. No vocation in the Church is sufficient on its own, not so much from an operational point of view as from that of its being a concrete word that narrates the inexhaustible greatness of the mystery of God's love. Thus the complementarity among religious, priests and laity, is not given by looking at one another but by looking together in the same direction.

A charism cannot be lived in isolation, it is not the property of an Institute, but is shared by consecrated persons, priests and laity. The call to live the Gospel in a radical way is for everyone, but there are different forms... The Second Vatican Council urges co-responsibility, sharing and communion. Alone we are neither meaningful nor authentic but called to learn again and again from our Founders and Foundresses. With the Church as the People of God, the Family of God,

the Second Vatican Council opened a process to place dynamically the Charisms (the Gifts of the Spirit) at the service of all People, at the service of the whole of Humanity, at the service of the Civilization of Love.... The Charismatic Families come to receive new impetus, new enthusiasm to put themselves at the service of the Gospel...

Communion among the Charismatic Families favours harmony among charisms and gives the Church and the World a surprising presence of Christ Jesus... The centre for Charismatic Families is always Christ: "Face of the Father's mercy". Each Charism enriches and presents the Face of Jesus with special luminosity. In our meetings of Charismatic Families everyone should feel at home and as a protagonist. May the meeting of the Charismatic Families be a sign of our common home: Charismatic Families open, in communion ... going beyond, guided by the Spirit ...

Our gifts of the Spirit are a Heritage for all Humanity... How can we give it to them? ... Charismatic Families are not self-referential and do not have a monopoly on charism; charism is a gift of the ecclesial Spirit to be given, without walls of separation, beyond any cultural, racial, linguistic, national, social, religious frontier... The presence of the Spirit, with its gifts, makes us vibrate, excites us, leads us to total surrender with the gratuitousness of love, here and now.

In the heart of our Founders and Foundresses there is a prophecy that plans a luminous hope filled with passion and is the prophecy of a radiant future for the Charismatic Families in the Church and the World in the context of Evangelization. Each one of them perceives and dreams of the gift received, as a wonderful gift of the Spirit, that will radiate a new light of the Gospel of Jesus into the world.

The Charismatic Families are gifts and fruits of the Spirit to the Church and the World. Impressive is the radiant influence of the Saints of Charismatic Families in the Church throughout the centuries. The current ecclesial orientation



invites us to emphasize the beauty of the Charismatic Families for their faith proclaimed, lived and celebrated, Eucharistic and Marian, for the witness of communion and commitment to the mission. The passion of our Founders and Foundresses continues to be contagious.

We are on our way, pilgrims... The Spirit who guided our Founders and Foundresses guides us. It is up to us to let ourselves be carried, to be docile, meek, humble, committed to follow, love and witness Jesus to the existential peripheries and the peripheries of our World today.

In Charismatic Families, one must act free from all pressure, haste and anxiety, communicate trust, serenity, enthusiasm, joy....: everything is in the hands of the Lord, the Risen Lord is in our midst. Everything in our ecclesial process is in the name and for the glory of the Holy Trinity.

It is the Spirit of the Lord who guides us in serenity, peace, meekness and joy. We are His Charismatic Families. He has generated them and guides them along the paths of the world to reach the heart of every brother and sister, to the farthest and most existential peripheries. Our World is a global village... "May the Holy Spirit, who leads the steps of believers to cooperate in Christ's work of salvation, be the guide and support of God's People to help them contemplate the Face of Mercy".

The Charismatic Families are a wonderful melting pot of communion, an ecclesial expression of sisters and brothers who feel involved, sharing responsibilities and tasks in the mission. The enthusiasm that is being manifested around Charismatic Families (several Institutes and Lay Associations), living the same charism in communion and in a multiplicity of forms, is a novelty that leads to the evangelical heart of their charisms and that of the Founders and Foundresses.

