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June 9, 2018

Feast of the Sacred Heart of Mary

Dear Sisters,

On June 9th, we celebrate the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Mary, the first feast of our Institute. The General Council extends to each sister their prayers and deep affection on this meaningful and joyous occasion. Happy Feast Day!

Also, on this day, Sr. Rosamond, as General Superior, wishes to formally convoke the General Chapter which will take place in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, from July 9-31, 2019. The theme for the General Chapter is ***“Called to Continue the Mission of Jesus Christ: Firm in Faith, Vibrant in Hope, Rooted in Love, One in Service.”***

As we previously announced, the Enlarged General Council will be held from June 12-21, 2018, at Cormaria Retreat House, Sag Harbor, New York. The Agenda for this meeting is to plan the outline for the General Chapter 2019. Therefore, soon after this meeting, the General Council will communicate with you regarding more specific details related to the planning of the General Chapter. The theme for the Enlarged General Council meeting continues our journey “On the Road to Emmaus” (Luke 24), with specific emphasis on “We are a ‘gospel memory’ for the people of God. The end of the Emmaus story is the beginning of ours.” This EGC meeting will enable us to have continuity on our faith-journey from the General Chapter of 2013, and we pray that the Holy Spirit will inspire us by the words of St. Paul in Ephesians 1:17-18: “May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our hearts that we may know what is the hope that belongs to our call.” It is in this spirit that we will gather as the Enlarged General Council in New York.

Now, we are invited to reflect on Mary, woman of hope. In the Gospel reading for the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Mary, we are presented with the story of the “Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple.” Pope Francis, in a homily on January 1, 2017, referred to this passage:

‘Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart!’ (Luke 2:51). In these words, Luke describes the attitude with which Mary took in all that they had experienced in those days. Far from trying to understand or master the situation, Mary is the woman who can treasure, that is to say, protect and guard in her heart, the passage of God in the life of his people. Deep within, she had learned to listen to the heartbeat of her Son, and that in turn taught her, throughout her life, to discover God’s heartbeat in history. She learned how to be a mother, and in that learning process she gave Jesus the beautiful experience of knowing what it is to be a Son. In Mary, the eternal word not only became flesh, but also recognized the maternal tenderness of God. With Mary, the God-Child learned to listen to the

yearnings, the trouble, the joys and the hopes of the people of the promise. With Mary, he discovered himself a Son of God's faithful people.

In the Gospels, Mary appears as a woman of very few words, and yet throughout her life she pondered deeply all that she experienced, and also pondered the words of her Son. Mary is a model for us embracing all humanity, as Jesus embraces all, and pondering always God's mysterious presence in her pilgrimage of faith. Even in her darkest hours under the cross of her Son, she kept faith and hope alive.

We see Mary again as a woman of few words and as a woman of hope gathered with the disciples on Pentecost, the first day of the Church, supporting the frightened disciples, yet encouraged by all the events following the Resurrection.

In faith and encouraged by God's grace, we are called to ponder deeply God's mysterious presence in our lives. With deep reflection, we are filled with hope as we grow in surrender to God's loving presence. We respond in profound faith to the invitations of grace God grants to us each day on our faith-journey.

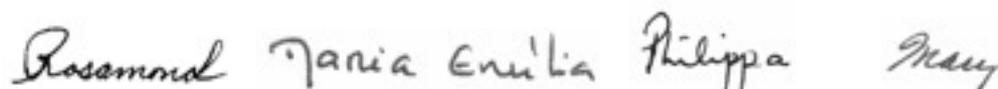
On this feast day, and throughout the coming year in preparation for our General Chapter, we are invited to reflect upon our experiences as an Institute and ponder the ways in which God has been present to us in our mission: guiding, enlightening, challenging, and supporting us in our efforts to proclaim by the witness of our lives that Jesus has come "that all may have life." Let us also vision together God's hope for our Institute in living as one body for mission. We look to Mary as our model, woman of hope, "woman of faith, woman filled with the Spirit, the poor one of Yahweh who treasured all things and pondered them in her heart, who heard the Word of God and did it, who in love bore Jesus Christ and brought him to birth for others." (*Const 56*)

Attached to this letter, we present to you for your reflection an icon painted by Bernadette Crook, RSHM, that she placed in the sanctuary of the chapel in our Generalate in Rome. As you may know, Bernadette died unexpectedly on May 5, 2018, while she was instructing our novices in the art of making icons in the novitiate in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Bernadette was a member of the EAP who lived in London.

We believe it is very appropriate at this moment in the Institute to share with you this icon called *Our Lady of the Sign* on the occasion of our Sacred Heart of Mary Feast Day. We express our deep gratitude to Bernadette for sharing her life and gifts with our sisters and the Church. She has artwork in the Mother House and in over 21 churches in many countries in Europe, Africa, North and South America, and the Middle East. We pray for Bernadette that she is in God's loving presence and ask her intercession on our behalf that we remain faithful disciples within our Institute.

With gratitude to God for the gift of Mary, woman of hope, we wish each sister a prayer-filled and joyful feast of the Sacred Heart of Mary.

Love,



Rosamond Blanchet Maria Emília Peliz

Philippa O'Sullivan

Mary Genino