

Religieuses de l'Assomption
Maison Généralice
17, rue de l'Assomption
75016 PARIS

20th Dec. 2015

Christmas Chapter 2015

Dear Sisters and Brothers of Assumption Together,

As I begin this letter, I cannot refrain from casting a retrospective, but not exhaustive, look over the past year. It has been marked by many events both happy and sad, which were recalled at length in the Report of the General Council to the CGP of October 2015. It is a long list: terrorist attacks, accidents, natural disasters, suicide bombings, wars raging in some countries and threatening others. Repeated massacres, slaughter of the innocent, all the violent vengeance attacks in different corners of our world remind us of the massacre of the innocents in the time of Jesus. These misfortunes breaking over the world haunt our prayers and often feed fear in us, undermining our ideal of peace. At the same time in difficult moments, there have been beautiful gestures of solidarity and acts of bravery; despite everything there have been gestures celebrating life. We have chosen to remain hopeful and to take a lead in the fight for life and joy, for it is in this world created by God that his beloved Son comes to take flesh.

It is good to recall the gifts of the Lord; because, thanks to his love, "... we are not destroyed; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning."¹ Indeed, we have been spoilt this year by so many happy events, by jubilees and anniversaries of every sort, by the celebration of the Year of Consecrated Life and the different documents which are the fruits thereof. The various messages of the Pope during his visits overseas, have created a considerable stir worldwide. The second part of the Synod on the Family has also aroused great interest in the Church and in the world in general.

To the Bull of indiction of the extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, published by the Pope in April, we can add his encyclical **Laudato Si**, received with great enthusiasm throughout the Church and even beyond. Then we have had the marvellous and unforgettable experience of the CGP in Guatemala which is in process of being transmitted in the different Provinces/Region. Finally, the Year of Mercy has been inaugurated with the opening of the Holy Door, in Rome on the 8th December, and in individual dioceses on the 13th December. All this is a source of spiritual renewal for sharing and growth in faith. What richness we have in our hands! So many texts which, from the echoes we have received, you have read, pondered on personally, in community, in your Provinces, with your friends and helpers in your shared mission.

Faced with such abundance, I do not want to add too much, but simply to invite you to continue to deepen your understanding of the documents cited above, letting them enrich and enlarge our Congregational texts. And even though I have been preparing this Christmas Chapter for months, I should like to speak to you today from the fullness of my heart, starting from the opening of the door of mercy.

¹ Lamentations 3:22



The door is open...

The door is open, the path has been laid out, let us make the crossing to the merciful heart of God, whence flows the unquenchable spring of his goodness, so as to join our brothers and sisters and share with them the joy of being the well-beloved sons and daughters of God. Let us rejoice like carefree children because we are confident, overwhelmed by the joy of feeling that we are missionaries of the Kingdom and courageous bearers of his love for the world!

The door is open, so that we may find the promised child, the perfect image of the glory of the Father and the definitive expression of his merciful being; He, the most beautiful of the children of earth!

The door is open, so that we may contemplate Mary, the Mother of the King-Redeemer come to give his life for his own. The door is open so that we may admire Joseph, in adoration before the divine majesty present in the fragility of the child who sleeps and entrusts himself to Joseph's protection!

The door is open, so that we may go forward towards the prince of Peace, with the shepherds, the first witnesses of this message of peace brought by the angels from heaven and destined for all nations.

The door is open, so that we may commit ourselves there with the Magi, seekers for the King of the Jews, and so that we may lead there all men and women of good will who desire him without knowing it.

The door is open, so that we in our turn may open the door of our hearts and our homes to those who need to confide, to find comfort and support!

The door is open, so that in a movement of conversion like that of the prodigal son, we may turn round so as to come back home and return to the Father who has been waiting for us for so long!

The door is open, so that may meet once more in a soothing relationship with the brothers and sisters that we did not have the strength to recognise and welcome, to love and to forgive.

The door is open, so that we may again follow the path of fraternal and sacramental Reconciliation which calms, heals and restores life.

The door is open, so that we may make of our communities, families and social circles, real “schools of love” where the pedagogy of encouragement, the habit of looking positively and the recognition of the gifts of each one are lived out, through true relationships, imbued with respect, compassion and tenderness.

The door is open so that the poor, refugees, migrants turned away at the borders, all the rejected and the forgotten of the earth left at the roadsides may take their place around the manger!

The door is open so that we may dare to water our thirsty hearts, awaken our buried desires and allow our wounds and diseases to be healed.

The door is open, so that we may find a place of intimacy where we can rest, trust, start again from Him who is the Source of living water, the Way, the Truth and the Life.

The door is open, so that we may be awakened and inspired by the Spirit who gives life and purifies so that we can use our energies and our creativity for peace, justice and the protection of creation.

The door is open, so that we may listen to the choir of angels and intone together the joyful song of the new heavens and new earth: ***Glory to God in the highest heavens and on earth peace for the humanity He loves!***

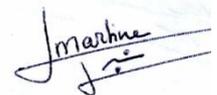
Thus He manifests himself whose “mercy extends from age to age for those who fear Him”², He of whom Mary sings in her Magnificat!

Pope Francis himself opens the path for us and invites us to walk it:

“... To pass through the Holy Door means to rediscover the infinite mercy of the Father who welcomes everyone and goes out personally to encounter each of them. This will be a year in which we grow ever more convinced of God’s mercy...May our passing through the Holy Door commit us to making our own the mercy of the Good Samaritan.”³

May the Lord find us ready to open to Him when he comes to knock on our door, accompanied by Mary his Mother and St Joseph.

Wishing you happy feasts of Christmas and the Holy Year 2016, in peace and joy!



Sr Martine Tapsoba
Superior General.

² Lk. 1:50

³ Homily of Pope Francis, Tuesday, 8th December, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, the launch day of the Jubilee of Mercy and the opening of the Holy Door