



+ Rome, January 5, 2012

Dear Sisters,

The Christmas Season ends with the Feast of the Baptism of Jesus. If it were up to us we would prolong this time. But the Liturgical Year does not dwell on the early life of Jesus of which we know very little. With his Baptism Jesus begins his actual mission as the Suffering Servant of God. He takes upon himself the sins of all human beings in order to help them recover their likeness to God. The Baptism in the Jordan already signifies the “baptism” of his death on the cross. Jesus is ready to embrace that “baptism.” The Father

accepts the surrender of his Son: “You are my beloved Son.”

In her colorful and highly symbolic painting the artist, Rosalind Hore, portrays the Baptism of Jesus in an impressive way. Jesus is standing in the waves which are penetrated with flames, indicating the “baptism by fire” of his Passion. The waves end in the crown of thorns. In the background we can see the cross. The flames which surround Jesus refer to his “baptism” on the cross, but they are also a sign that the Spirit of the Lord is upon him. (Cf. Luke 4:18). The yellow color indicates the light shining in the re-opened heaven, which had been closed by the sin of Adam, but is now open again for all human beings of good will. Indeed, the artist succeeded in representing through color and design, yet in a profound theological way, the core of Jesus’ mission.

What has all this to do with our life? By our vows we have committed ourselves in a special way to live our baptism. (Cf. Article 1 of our Constitutions). As Jesus united his baptism in the Jordan with the “baptism” of his death on the cross, so also our vows are a “baptism” in which we express our readiness to die and to rise with Christ. “But then it is important to ‘put all the cards on the table.’ In poverty, chastity and obedience, in prayer, liturgy and in love of neighbor the Religious should live this new life of the risen Christ. Then it will become fertile.” (Archbishop Ludwig Schick)

Baptism consecrates us to be kings, prophets and priests. By participation in the Kingdom of Christ we are responsible to cooperate in building up the Kingdom of God, each one at her appointed place. As prophets we are to give witness to Christ, mainly by our life. The

consecration as a prophet obliges us to make a difference in a world where so often values are turned up-side down and where some expect that one can get along without God. As prophets we are to be people who awaken questions in others when they see how we live. "About the first Christians outsiders said: 'See how they love one another!' They attracted attention precisely by their style of life and relationship. That made their message attractive for their contemporaries. I think that is an opportunity for us Christians [and Religious] today: People will be attracted to our faith and inspired by it not so much by theoretical considerations but through a net of vital relationships which are characterized by love of neighbor and love of God." (Andrea Rösch) Baptism consecrates us as priests; by this we participate in the general priesthood of Christ. In a world in which the human face is so often disfigured or deformed we are to be so transparent that the face of Jesus can be seen in us so that we become a living presence of his life and action in our world. (Cf. Article 1).

But what was the life and action of Jesus? His mission was not to break a bruised reed nor quench a smoldering wick. (Cf. Is 42:3) In order to fulfill this mission he let himself be baptized. "That is also the mission for us when we leave the manger: not to break a bruised reed, but to raise up bruised people; not to quench smoldering wicks, but to discover and to strengthen in others the last spark of life, love and goodness. Gentleness and love are the characteristics of Christ having become man. Those attitudes should also be characteristic of those who call themselves Christians." (Bishop Franz-Josef Bode) .

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Information:

- First of all I want to thank all of you very heartily for the congratulations and wishes of blessing for my birthday, for Christmas and the New Year. I enjoyed all the signs of unity and confidence. May God reward you for all!
- I also want to thank all Sisters who have sent a logo symbolizing the theme of the General Chapter. Every logo is very meaningful, and it is not possible for me to choose only one. Therefore I will incorporate the symbols into the preparation of the General Chapter.
- In January the Chilean Province will assume a new ministry in Curacaví, a city which is located about 38 miles from Santiago. Three Sisters, two from the Chilean Province and one from the N.A. Eastern Province, are designated for activity in the small elementary school for children who come from poorer families. May the Lord bless the readiness of these Sisters for this new beginning!

- The Sisters of our mission in the Philippines have asked to no longer be called “Unit” but – like Uruguay-Argentina - “Delegation”. This is only a change of name, the status remains unchanged. As a date for the new name we chose January 25, the anniversary of the foundation of our Philippine Mission 17 years ago.
- The North American Western Province has presented the petition to become a Delegation with the Generalate, at first as an experiment, effective September 8, 2012. It will be evaluated during the next General Chapter in 2013. Sister Janice Boyer will be the appointed Delegate, Sister Mary Clement Eiden and Sister Alice Mary Ortmann her Assistants. I ask you to support this decision with your prayers.
- In Aparecida, Brazil, where I participated in the meeting of the Delegates of the UISG, we received a little insight into local Religious Life. We experienced conversations with “young” (not necessarily dependent on age) Religious, coming from various cultures. They courageously confront the social, religious and political difficulties, serving especially all those who are rejected by society: the indigenous, those addicted to drugs, those who live in misery in the Favelas. Often some of them have to pay for this service with their lives. Some projects for the poor and suppressed – for example in Amazonia and after the earthquake also in Haiti - are carried out together with members of various Religious communities.
In one of my next letters I will present some thoughts of the conference given by two Brazilian theologians.
- In the new year I will again begin with some travels. On January 17 I travel to Chile where I will first give a retreat, requested by the Sisters, with the theme: Spirituality of Letting Go. Then I will participate in the meeting of the Treasurers of the Chilean Province in which Sr. DeSales and Sr. Maria del Rosario will also take part. From February 3-12, I will be in Montevideo, where some commitments are waiting for me. As always I am very grateful for your accompanying prayers.

With hearty greetings, also from my Councilors,

I am in gratitude, your

Sr. Adalberto