



I know the fountain well
that flows and runs ...
though it is night.

St. John of the Cross

+ Rome, June 3, 2010

Dear Sisters,

With this letter I want to give you a review of the UISG-Plenary Assembly which took place from May 7 to 11 in Rome. There were more than 800 Superiors General from 87 different countries in attendance. The Leitmotif was the thought of St. John of the Cross: "I know the fountain well that flows and runs ... though it is night." To rediscover the "fountain", that is the mystical and prophetic aspect of our vocation amid the "night". These words were like a thread that ran through all of those days.

The first conference, "MYSTICISM AND PROPHECY. A STYLE OF LIFE AND NEW AREOPAGUS," underlined the close connection of mysticism and prophecy in consecrated life. The speaker, Fr. Ciro Garcia OCD, mentioned concrete areas of witness in which we as mystics and prophets are challenged today. According to the speaker the new Areopagus are not only fields of action but also fundamental attitudes which have to permeate our apostolic activities. To this belongs, amongst other things, the personal life of faith, listening to the Word, the experience of God in daily life, humanization, and building of community. "All consecrated persons are called to be mystics and prophets," said the speaker, "which means to experience God and his Word that they must transmit."

In the morning of the second day Sr. Judette Gallares, RC, a religious from the Philippines, spoke to us. Her theme was: "OPENING THE HEART TO LISTEN: BECOMING MYSTICS AND PROPHETS TODAY." In her talk she focused on Lydia from the Acts of the Apostles (16,11-15,40). This woman can be a model for our religious life today. Paul met Lydia in Philippi together with other women who had assembled on a Sabbath in a place of prayer by the river outside the city gates. They were open for the Good News which Paul proclaimed. After having heard Paul, Lydia asked to be baptized. The baptismal grace urged her to action. She asked Paul and Silas to stay in her home although with that she violated the limits of hospitality which forbade women to offer a safe haven to male strangers. Her home became in this way the first house church in Europe. Lydia shows us that listening to and contemplation of the Word of God can also enable in us potentialities which we never had thought of. "The Gospel therefore challenges us to revitalize our communities to be places where we can learn the language of understanding, to seek ways of bridging the gaps with other people, especially those who belong to our communities. What can touch the hearts of people is the transforming presence of God which happens within a community where stories of life are shared, where songs are sung, where prayers are raised, and where doors are open to welcome the homeless and the stranger." Let us ask: In what way can we make our communities centers of hospitality and encounters with God?

The conference in the afternoon was given by Sr. Liliane Sweko, SNDdeN, a Religious from the Congo: "CALLED TO ILLUMINATE WITH PROPHETIC LIGHT THE WORLD OF DARKNESS." Beginning with the reality of many African countries she stated that "in this world darkened by so much drama, wars, violence and disdain for human beings, religious life should create new paths, find a new ability not only to watch over the fire within but also to find fresh opportunities to embrace the world in a profound and totally new way." We are called to be salt of the earth and light of the world. "Salt only adds taste if it accepts the mystery of transformation and self-emptying. Light only appears when the wick in our lantern is plunged deeply in oil, when it agrees to be consumed." That means that we are called as mystics; "we women religious of today are called to discover again the power of the Word and of prayer." Only then will we see the world with the eyes of God. Only then will we recognize our prophetic mission to be present in a world which is longing for love, justice and peace.

On the third day Rabbi Arthur Green spoke to us. He unfolded in his talk the THEOLOGY OF EMPATHY. The basic theme of his speech was Genesis 1,27: "God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him." But "to find God in every human being is no small task. We could spend a lifetime at it and still not perfect this art, but I call upon you to join me in it." And he continued: "You can't make God's image; you can only be God's image. Ultimately, we are all of the One. Empathy means both embracing each of us in our diversity and seeing through to our oneness."

Fr. Bruno Secondin, a Carmelite, presented in his conference the "almond branch" and the "boiling pot", images which Jeremiah (Jer 1:11-13) uses. The theme was given as a question: What is the future for our mystical-prophetic heritage? The speaker took as a starting point the experience of Jeremiah. The images of the almond branch and the boiling pot – images for salvation and disaster – are shown at the beginning of Jeremiah's mission. We know that his prophetic service was accompanied by many failures. In the fulfilment of our mission today we also sometimes experience limits which cause us to question the meaning of our service. In such situations it is important to "rediscover the radiance of the original experience when we were fragile like the flowering almond branch, but also audacious like the boiling pot. Only thus can we again become wise and not carefree interlocutors, audacious and not paralyzed, trusting in God in a new and mystical way. But we can also be explorers of just glimpsed and abruptly interrupted pathways, solid intercessors and critical protagonists. We open new pathways of diaconia and trust in a Church which seems to be afraid of prophecy and lacks the courage to pass through the dark nights of a post-modernity of unhappy passions. The actual crisis is similar to the boiling pot that destroys everything. Let us commit ourselves to become like that blossoming almond branch announcing a new season!"

After every conference we were invited to ask ourselves: What does God want to say to us by this talk? Where does God lead us? Challenging questions! I recommend that you reflect personally and in common over these questions.

You can find all conferences on the homepage of the UISG in your respective language: www.uisg.org. Choose the English language under "Welcome" and go to Plenary 2010 Conferences. It would be good to deepen the one or other theme in your communities. Our mission to be mystics and prophets is at stake. All themes have a close relationship to the challenges which we as Congregation have to face in the process of reconfiguration. I add as an appendix to this letter the Statement which was developed during the Plenary

Information

- 1 I did not have an opportunity so far to thank you sincerely for your prayers, the Eucharistic celebrations and the many written congratulations for my Feastday. I appreciate these signs of bonds which you expressed towards me.
- 2 A hearty thanks for the generous donations which have been received from you until now for the renovations of our schools in Chile which had been hit severely by the earthquake. Each contribution is a ray of hope for our Sisters in Chile. I ask you to continue this help as far as possible. During my visit to Chile in April, I could see that the damages are much greater than it was first assumed. I was deeply impressed by the firm decision of the people to rebuild, in spite of the destruction, and of the solidarity among them. The Sisters and co-workers whom I could meet told time and again about their agony during the night of February 27, and this feeling cannot simply be eliminated, especially because there are again and again after shocks some of which are very strong. For many whom I met it was important that they could talk about their fears, the damages, their worry for the future and that I could reassure them: "You are not alone, we will help you as much as we can." Now and then I also heard the question whether the earthquake was a punishment by God. But the earthquake had also challenged many to reflect about the real values of life. Material goods had become less important. Fundamental was the gift of life, the unity of the family members and the neighbors, the sharing of the little that was still available, the solidarity among each other – values which are easily forgotten in our society characterized by consumerism and individualism. Summing up I can say that my visit was an important sign for the solidarity and unity of our Congregation with the Chilean Province. Often I said Good-bye with the appeal: "Fuerza Chile! Life continues and it is stronger than destruction and death."
- 3 From June 15 to 24, I will be in Wilmette in order to participate in the Provincial Assembly and in the Jubilee celebration of the Sisters.
- 4 On June 28 I will travel again to Paderborn where I will accompany the first part of the tertianship for three Sisters: Sr. Anna Tran, Sr. Maria Theresa Nguyen, both from the N.A. Eastern Province, and Sr. Angela Machuca from the Chilean Province. On July 13 we travel together to Rome where Sr. Joann Marie Aumand from the N.A Eastern Province will continue to conduct the tertianship. I ask you to accompany the three Sisters with your prayers during this time of preparation which is so important for them.

Dear Sisters, may Mother Pauline, whose birthday and baptismal day we commemorate today, help us to become mystics and prophets today. Her mystical-prophetic attitude is aptly expressed in the maxim: "My hands at work; my heart with God." (1880)

With sincere greetings from the Sisters of the Generalate community I am in gratitude,

Your

Sr. Adalberto

UISG Plenary Assembly

Rome, May 2010

STATEMENT

2010-2013

“I know the fountain well that flows and runs... though it is night”

(St John of the Cross)

THE FUTURE OF RELIGIOUS LIFE IS IN ITS MYSTICAL AND PROPHETIC FORCE

“My soul is thirsting for God, the living God” Ps 42, 3

During this Assembly:

We, 800 superiors general coming from 87 countries, together have quenched our thirst at the Fountain of life, the God of Jesus Christ, source of our joy, our hope and our strength.

We commit ourselves to:

- To rediscover anew and listen to the Fountain which speaks in our hearts, through others and through creation.
- To draw water from the Source of our charism and rediscover the dynamism of our first call.
- To taste and share together the Word and the Bread.
- To promote a constant dialogue between the Word of God and the events which happen in our world.
- To invite others to come and drink at the Fountain.

“If you consider me a believer... come and dwell in my house”

Acts 16, 15

Like Lidia, a listening and faith filled woman, we are invited to open our hearts and our homes and to remember the living waters of our baptism.

We commit ourselves to:

- To create a new style of mystical and prophetic life, open and hospitable, inclusive, respectful of differences and acknowledging the richness of other cultures and religions.
- To recreate the art of living in common, marked by deep human relationships, a listening heart, empathy and non-violence in order to be witnesses of Gospel values.
- To focus on initial and on-going formation in order to unify the mystical and prophetic dimensions of our consecrated life.
- To live in harmony with the whole Cosmos and to dwell respectfully on this Earth

“Put out into the deep... and cast your nets...”
Luke 5,4

We have become aware that we should not fear the night of the deep waters.

We commit ourselves to:

- To courageously identify the “nights” of the Church, of society and of our congregations.
- To discover the sparks of light hidden in the heart of violence, poverty and the lack of meaning.
- To open our eyes to discover new paths of light in the darkness of our world: in the precarious situation of women, the existential restlessness of the youth, the consequences of war and natural catastrophes and the extreme poverty which leads to violence.
- To offer as consecrated women a ministry of compassion and healing.
- To build inter-congregational networks at local and international levels, involving the laity in order to initiate different projects and to work for the transformation of unjust structures.
- To go beyond the frontiers of our respective charisms and to unite together in order to offer a mystical and prophetic word to our world.
- To engage in truthful dialogue with the hierarchical Church at all levels in order to achieve a greater recognition of the role of women.

*As Mary, let us remain awake and vigilant,
constantly searching for the Fountain that flows,
certain that It will be found, although it is night.*