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Study Materials and Prayers

Preparation for the XIV General Chapter

Responsible:

General Superior and Council
Sexennial 2013-2019

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PRESENTATION

Rome, July 06, 2019

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Subject: Sending of study document and prayer in preparation for the
XIV General Chapter

Dear Sr. Luiza Dal Moro, mscs
Provincial Superior and Councilors, and Sisters
Province Our Lady Fatima - Melrose Park, IL, USA

Dear Sisters,

we are drawing closer to the realization of XIV General Chapter, whose preparation intensifies itself in the various areas of Congregation, at this time which precedes it, since the General Chapter is an event of grace, a gift that God gives to all members of the Congregation and for the Church and, as such, it should be welcomed by all the Sisters so that everyone may feel participants of it, from its preparation until its accomplishment, welcoming the appeals of the Lord, in this present moment in our history.

As previously announced, the XIV General Chapter will take place from October 22 to November 17, 2019 at the Center Internazionale di Spiritualità Sacro Cuore di Gesù, Rocca di Papa, Rome-Italy, based on the theme: *Consecrated for the mission with the migrants and refugees* and the Motto: "*Walk humbly with your God*" (Mq 6.8).

Let us ready our hearts and let us welcome with openness this privileged time, the great *Kairos* of our God, in a listening attitude, and availability to the will of the Father and to the motions of the Holy Spirit. I ask you that the XIV General Chapter be

prepared and lived, in all our communities, with prayer and Eucharistic celebrations, as well as through study and reflection of our subsidies, allowing ourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit, in order that the will of God will be fulfilled¹. So, with the view to prepare the XIV General Chapter in communion and participation of all the Sisters of the Congregation, we send you in annex these **three subsidies which** are:

1. ***PRAYER in preparation to the XIV General Chapter***, prepared by Sr. Lice Maria Signor and Sr. Giuliana Maria Bosini: prayer lived in the Spirit and in unity of heart will help us live the General Chapter as a time of thanksgiving, discernment and action, and for this reason it must be prepared with much prayer. And, so, in communion with all the Sisters of the Congregation, let us join our voices and intentions and, in a single chorus, let us ask the Holy Spirit for enlightenment for the chapter Sisters who will be attending the XIV General Chapter and for the success of the same; and that this general chapter be, in fact, a time of grace and renewal for the Congregation and a new impetus to our Scalabrinian consecrated and Missionary life, in the centrality in Jesus Christ.
2. ***Consecrated for the mission with migrants and refugees- "Walk humbly with your God" (Mq 6.8)***, containing a text for reflection and a Lectio Divina, written by Sr. Elizângela Chaves Dias, which enable us to get into the dynamics of the theme of the chapter, allowing ourselves to be touch by the operating and renewing grace of the Lord operating and to be enlighten by the biblical text which will guide our chapter itinerary. As

¹ Circular n. 19/2018 - November 4 2018 - Convocation for the XIV General Chapter of the Congregation, Sr. Neusa de Fátima Mariano, general superior.

consecrated for the mission with the migrants and refugees, the imperative of Micah 6, 8: "*Walk humbly with your God*" speaks to us of a spirituality of the journey and of the way, i.e. the spirituality of itinerancy, which implies mysticism because Mystic is the one who discovers that he cannot stop walking, sustained by hope that is *a virtue of the little ones*, according to the heart of God.

3. ***Evangelical Itinerancy in the MSCS Congregation, and the Itinerant Service***, written by Sr. Luce Maria Signor, are two texts that allow to traverse walkways and historic landscapes and interiors. By reading and reflection of these texts, we can realize that, since the origins of the Congregation, we live the itinerancy without much baggage and without special means, but the same following of Christ, as the geographical and itinerant spirituality, allowed those who preceded us to discern the common good. Itinerancy is a necessary companion to the mission, to the service, "to take up again the path" of the origins, living on the border lines, sharing the fate of those who were made itinerants.

Therefore, I request the local superiors, along with the Sisters in the communities, that according to the local situations, to program and streamline community meetings for studies, reflections, deepening, sharing and prayer, based on the aforementioned subsidies; convinced that the community moments will be a precious occasion for sharing the experience of faith in the light of the Scalabrinian charisma and for the revival of our religious consecration, on a path of fidelity to the call received from the Lord.

We entrust this journey of preparation for the XIV General Chapter of the Congregation under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Hope, and implore her to *teach us to do*

everything that her Son tells us (cf. Jn 2.5), and teach us the faith and hope because it is she who will give a new meaning to *our Walking humbly with the Lord*. Let us go on with hope. Our pace, in the process of internal reorganization of the Congregation must become faster in walking the roads of the world, serving, cheerful and generously, the migrants and refugees. *Duc in altum!*

In communion of prayer,

Sr. Neusa de Fátima Mariano, mscs
Superior General

Consecrated for the Mission with Migrants and Refugees

“Walk humbly with your God” (Mic 6,8).

Sr. Elizângela Chaves Dias, mscs

1. Introduction

The Sisters participating at the XIII General Chapter, interpreting the 'signs of the times' and the 'epochal change' in the light of the Holy Spirit, were inspired and assertive in pointing out the need to initiate a process of internal reorganization in the Congregation, in order to revitalize the living of the charism and the specific mission of the Congregation in the Church at the service of migrants. From the first movements of the Spirit it was clear that this process would be sterile, if it were limited to the optimization of structures, works and missions. It is therefore essential that the reorganization starts from consecrated life in the proper sense of the following Christ as option for Christ, which entails a vocational, spiritual and community revitalization.

Since then a long way has been covered by the general government, the various provinces, the delegation in Asia, all the communities and each Sister. In this journey, the Lord has constantly graced us and confirmed us with abundant signs. In fact, since the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Francis has insisted on the importance and the urgency of religious life to undertake a fruitful journey of renewal:

“... it calls for following in the footsteps of past generations in order to grasp the high ideals, and the vision and values which inspired them ... In this way we come to see how the charism has been lived over the

years, the creativity it has sparked, the difficulties it encountered and the concrete ways those difficulties were surmounted. (...) Yet everything proves instructive and, taken as a whole, acts as a summons to conversion”. (Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter to All Consecrated People, 2014)

In this sense, at the beginning of the process, the beatification of Mother Assunta was a sign of the abundant grace of God. In fact, Mother Assunta is one of our inspiring models, whose only ideal was to do God’s will in fidelity to the Scalabrinian charism, lived in a total and unreserved commitment to the service of the most vulnerable in the world of migration. Like Blessed Scalabrini, also Blessed Assunta Marchetti and the Venerable Servant of God, Fr. Joseph Marchetti, saw the face of Christ in the migrants and consumed their lives for love, serving the Lord in the orphans and the abandoned.

Another sign of God have been the migratory waves of this new millennium, which have changed the classic paradigms of *mission ad gentes* and of mission lands. The old continent has become a mission land, because thousands of migrants and refugees arrive daily by land or by sea, in the hope of finding a place that guarantees them protection. The migratory waves that hit Europe have certainly had a great media impact. Migrants, however, are on the move in all continents. Every day new situations set in motion thousands of people, not so much in search of the promised land, but of a land that offers them refuge and what is necessary to continue their lives without ceasing dreaming of better days and of a possible return.

On the one hand, these signs reveal the importance of the Scalabrinian vocation, charism and mission in the Church and in the

world: ***“consecrated for the mission with migrants and refugees”***. On the other hand, they confirm that the reorganization of our lifestyle, of our communities, structures, works and missions is the right journey to take in order to respond in an effective and creative way to the appeals of this era of change. Therefore, we are invited to celebrate and be grateful for the journey we have already taken, without forgetting that we are only at the beginning of the journey, and that our journey will only be fruitful if we ***“walk humbly with God”***. We are invited to reflect and pray on the journey we are to undertake, and on the best way to walk in the light of the prophet Micah.

2. The journey as a metaphor for life

In the Sacred Scriptures the terms “journey and walking” are metaphors for life and existence. Walking is the meaning of life in itself; it is in walking that the human identity is constituted. To walk is more than moving geographically from one point to another in the space; it indicates a religious ethical lifestyle, a behavior, a way of proceeding, a destination.

For nomadic peoples walking is at the very core of their vital activity. They live continuously walking; their existence finds its fulfillment in walking on always new paths. In this sense, human life is a journey into the existence, directed toward the other, the self, the unknown, God; towards eternity, where death is not the end of the journey, but a passage to fullness.

The search for identity, the search for the meaning of life and of one’s own destiny make the human being a *viator* (wayfarer), that is, an itinerant in search of something superior, open to the absolute, desirous of possessing it and of becoming similar to Him. The existential movement that strengthens the journey is not only salvific from a religious point of view for the person of faith; walking is a

salvific act for any human being who seeks the sense of existence as *homo viator* (a wayfarer).

In the course of human history, philosophy, literature, art, poetry, religions and politics have interpreted the journey as a metaphor for human existence. The Bible is populated with characters who have undertaken their journey in different ways. In fact, God called Abraham to walk: “Walk towards the land that I will show you” (Gen 12:4). Abraham’s response to the call of God was to walk. Abraham said absolutely nothing, asked no questions, offered no resistance. The literal translation of Abraham’s answer to God would sound this way: “Abraham went as the Lord directed him.”

Abraham was not alone, his wife was with him. Abraham and Sara are prototypes of those who walk into the unknown. Their vocation is to walk on a journey without return; theirs is a departure without return, in faith and self-giving. In this way one grows in faith, accepts to be guided by God, hopes in Him and trusts in His promises. In the vocation of Abraham and Sarah, walking is synonymous with becoming a blessing for all families, of fruitfulness and conquest of the land. Abraham was blessed, not because he possessed the land, neither because he had children, nor because he was circumcised, but because he walked and “it was credited to him as righteousness” (Gn 15:6; Rm 4: 3.9.22; Gl 3:6).

In the vocation of Abraham and Sarah, walking is synonymous with obedience. If they had not walked, Abraham would not be the father of a multitude of nations (Gen 12: 2, 17:5); Sarah, the barren woman (Gen. 11:30, 16,1), would not be mother of nations, kings of peoples would not have been born of her (Gen 17:16; 21:1-7). If they had not walked, they would not have been our fathers in the faith, for “by faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place

that he was to receive as an inheritance; he went out, not knowing where he was to go” (Heb 11: 8-12).

Jacob’s obedience is also walking. During his escape God appeared to him in a dream and made a commitment to walk with him wherever he would have gone: “Know that I am with you and I will protect you wherever you go” (Gn 28:15). In a different way from the vocation of Abraham and Sarah, which is a journey without return; the vocation of Jacob is a journey of return “I will bring you back to this land”, the land of promise, the land of his fathers.

What Abraham is asked to abandon (Gen 12:1-4a), Jacob is called to resume (Gen 31:3): the homeland, the family and the father’s house. Abraham and Sarah, Jacob and his family walk through the unknown. Abraham is presented as the paradigm of the journey without return, while Jacob is the paradigm of a journey of return, a symbol of cunning, which embodies the ethics of the journey, of transience, and of adaptation to adverse circumstances (Gn 31:4-13).

Abraham and Jacob represent the dialectic of walking: going or coming, coming and going, every journey is salvific and the only real temptation is to stop and settle down.

3. Journey and itinerancy as metaphor for discipleship

The whole Bible narrates the journey of God towards humanity, as well as the journey of humanity towards God. This process has not always been linear and without obstacles. What is more interesting, however, is that the initiative is always of God, who, in his infinite and merciful love wants to meet humanity, walks through the garden of the newly created universe calling by name: “Adam, where are you Adam ?!” (Gn 3:9). In fact, in the Old Testament God reveals himself as the God of the journey, the

migrant God and the God of migrants. After electing, liberating, and making a covenant with his people, God decides to pitch his tent among that multitude of refugees, to live and walk among his people. There are numerous biblical testimonies depicting the migrant God among migrants (Ex 25-31; 35-40).

It is interesting to note that in this dynamics it is not humanity who ascends to God, but God who descends towards humanity (Ex 40:34-38). From the moment in which the tent, that is, God's moving dwelling place, is established in the midst of his people, humanity no longer needs to climb mountains or walk towards a sacred place to meet God, because God himself lives and walks with his people, being known as the God of the journey, the Migrant God. Along the way God reveals his sovereignty through the protection and the provision of what is necessary to continue the journey until reaching the desired destination. God provides water (Ex 15:22-27), food (Ex 16), clothing (Deut 29:5), legislation based on justice (Deut 4:8), shade during the day and light to illuminate the night (Ex 40:38). Only those who really set off, trusting in God, have the opportunity to make this profound and existential experience of the care, the companionship and the careful and loving guidance of God (Dt 10: 17-19).

In Christ, the divine option of staying and walking among his people becomes radicalized. The Word of God pitches his tent in the womb of humanity, in the bosom of one of the Lord's poor (*anawim*) (John 1:14), to dwell and walk, not only as a presence, but as a human and divine person, together with his people (Lk 1-2). The evangelists insist on revealing this particular aspect of the life of Christ, that is, the choice to be a pilgrim, to become a migrant in solidarity with migrants (Mt 25:35), the option to always be on the move, determined to fulfill the will of the Father (Lk 9: 51).

Also in the following, the initiative is divine. It is Christ who walks through the squares and banks of lakes and margins of cities, inviting for discipleship. In this dynamic, the disciple is invited to the *imitatio Dei* (imitation of God) in the *sequela Christi* (following of Christ). To follow Christ implies a willingness to set out on the road, to live a constant exodus, because the dynamics of the exodus is a permanent exit and provisionality (Mt 8:19-22), as Jesus himself said: “Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head” (Mt 8:20).

In the early church, even before they were known as Christians, the followers of Christ’s teachings were known as “those on the way” (Acts 9:2, 24:13-16). According to the biblical testimony, to be a pilgrim, to be itinerant, is not just an anthropological data, an accidental element in the life of an individual; being a migrant is not only a consequence of a social, political and economic process. Indeed, itinerancy is a fundamental element of the identity of God’s people, it is in its DNA, it is a performative element, because it characterizes, gives identity, and describes what is proper and specific to the people of God. From this perspective (Heb.11), Paul reads and interprets the Scriptures, to find a foundation to his option for itinerancy, because as an itinerant apostle Paul continues the journey initiated by the chosen people, traveled by Jesus and recommended to the disciples (1Cor 9:16).

From this same perspective, Peter refers to those who have embraced the faith as “migrants, scattered” (1 Pt 1: 1), because for Peter, what characterizes the faith in Christ is the consciousness of “being strangers” in relation with social structures and mentality, as well as the awareness that in this life and in this world we are just transient (Lv 25:23). We walk in view of the mission which consists in proclaiming Christ’s good news of the universality of salvation

and of the closeness of the Kingdom of God, in which no one is a guest, nor a foreigner, nor a stranger, but a member of the one family of God (Eph 2:19).

The proper logic of the following is walking, to be itinerant. It is not possible to follow someone without leaving one's own place, without moving, without going out to meet others, without leaving the comfort zone, without being willing to embrace the ideals of the one we follow. To follow, however, is more than a physical displacement, it is a real metanoia, a change of course, of direction, a change of mentality, which involves affections, feelings, emotions, that is to say, a total commitment. Following Christ implies loving what He has loved, defending what He has defended, choosing what He has chosen and living as He has lived. In order to follow Christ, it is essential to walk with the eyes fixed on Him and on His plan of inclusion (Mt 22,1-14, Lk 14, 15-24).

Throughout his pilgrimage, Christ shows his solidarity with those he meets along the way, especially the most vulnerable. And even today, He suffers with those who suffer, dies with those who die, and rejoices with those who rejoice. Following Christ is a call to itinerancy, to know more closely the pilgrim God incarnated in Jesus Christ; and to experience in the transience the overabundance of his unconditional love, which neither forsakes nor abandons, but walks along with his people. In order to grow in the living of the Scalabrinian charism and in solidarity with migrants, as disciples of Christ, it is essential to experience itinerancy and the evangelical and missionary service with the migrants.

In addition to the formation of knowledge, understood as an accumulation of information, the experience of migration, of uprooting, of meeting with other peoples, with different cultures; the challenges of learning new methods and new languages, the

willingness to listen and sharing life with migrants are undoubtedly indispensable for a greater solidarity with migrants and refugees. It is worth noting that evangelical solidarity does not correspond to the perspective of social service, which classifies migrants as users of a system of public services and social benefits. Being in solidarity, in the evangelical sense, implies a profound identification with the vulnerability of the human being, in which the image and likeness of God is threatened.

In every migrant who suffers unjustly, all humanity is threatened, the image and likeness of God is threatened. Every time a Scalabrinian meets a migrant or a refugee, the whole humanity regains hope: “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, for I was a migrant and you have welcomed me” (Mt 25:35).

4. The Mystique of the Journey

Cora Coralina, a Brazilian poet and narrator, considered one of the most important Brazilian writer, affirms: “What matters in life is not the starting point, but the journey. Walking and sowing, in the end we will have something to reap”.

Walking into the unknown is the dynamics of life. In fact, every day is new, every moment is new, every second is new, every encounter is new; we can even predict what will happen, but we cannot determine it, because the order of things is not in our domain. Walking towards the totally unknown is an experience of total abandonment in which, at a certain moment, the exterior journey intersects with the inner journey; at that moment the pilgrim finds himself exposed, naked, lacking and abandoned.

The call to walk beyond the comfort and security zone (without knowing the language, culture, habits, mentality) is an opportunity to encounter oneself, one’s own limits, fears and

insecurities; it is an opportunity to meet the God of the journey along the way, to experience being totally in the hands of God and to recognize Christ, who saves me, in the face of the other who welcomes me: “Come, you who are blessed by my Father ... for I was a migrant and you have welcomed me” (Mt 25:35).

In this sense, walking can be a mystical experience, because it is an inner and an external movement of displacements that leads to the encounter, to the relationship, to the unveiling of the deepest identity of the human being as a guest, a pilgrim, a transient being: “for the land is mine, and you are but aliens who have become my tenants” (Lv 25: 23). To be transient is the experience of having no place to live, of being always ready to remove the tent and to plant it elsewhere (Nm 33). The mystic “inhabits nowhere, he is inhabited” (Tolentino, *The Mystique of the Instant*, 32).

The awareness of being transient on the earth leads us to feel empathy and communion with the experience of migrants, of migration, and transience. This experience was not accidental in the life of the chosen people, but it was a novelty in relation to the God of the covenant. Israel cannot forget or neglect its identity: “Because you were a migrant in Egypt” (Ex 22:20; 23:9; Lev 19:34; 25:23; Deut 10:19; 1Ch 29:15); because Israel met God when was a migrant. Past experience should be remembered so as not to be repeated with others: “Remember that you were a slave in Egypt” (Deut 5:15; 15:15; 16:12; 24:18; 22). The experience of migration carries with it a ethical-moral responsibility: “You shall not molest or oppress a migrant, for you were once migrants yourselves in the land of Egypt” (Ex 22:21).

Christ is the pilgrim par excellence who, migrating from the Trinity, decided to establish his tent among us (Jn 1:14) and assuming the experience of his people lived as a migrant refugee in

Egypt (Mt 2:13-15). His journey was not wandering aimlessly. The Gospel of Luke says: “When the days for his being taken up were fulfilled, he resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem” (Lk 9:51). Jesus did not walk in whichever way, or in whichever direction; Jesus walked resolutely, that is, with determination, courage and the conscience of who knows the path he must take; his goal was the will of the Father. Jesus is the God with us, the Emmanuel (Mk 5:2; Is 7:14), who loves and cares for the migrants, to the point of identifying himself with migrant: “I was a migrant and you welcomed me” (Mt 25:35).

As consecrated for the mission with migrants and refugees, Micah’s imperative “Walk humbly with your God” (Mk 6: 8) tells us about a spirituality of the journey and of the walking, that is, a spirituality which involves the itinerancy, fruit of a response of faith; which implies the uprooting from personal and material security, in order to undertake a journey towards the Kingdom of God announced by Christ during his pilgrimage on earth.

To live the spirituality of itinerancy or of the journey is to be mystics, because the mystic is the one who discovers that he cannot stop walking. Certainly from what he misses, he realizes that every place for which he passes is still provisional and that his research has to continue. The mystic is the one who is not satisfied with routine, who walks and seeks something beyond routine. The meaning of life cannot lie only in fulfilling an agenda: to get up, to pray, to have coffee, to work, to have lunch, to return to work, to pray, to have dinner and to sleep, and next day starting it over again. It cannot be just this, there must be a transcendent meaning for which to walk, that is to say, life has a meaning. And this kind of excess, which is his desire to find the transcendent meaning, leads him to overcome

himself, to cross and leave places (Tolentino Mendonca, *The Mystic of the instant*, 31), in order to meet the eternal.

For Micah, the secret of a prosperous future lies in “walking humbly with God”, certain that God has loved us in the past, is faithful in the present and will not disappoint us in the future. Pope Francis says: “This is the hope which does not disappoint; it is the hope which enables consecrated life to keep writing its great history well into the future. It is to that future that we must always look, conscious that the Holy Spirit spurs us on so that he can still do great things with us” (Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter to All Consecrated People, 2014).

5. To walk humbly with God

Micah agrees with the biblical tradition regarding the importance of walking, as an essential element for the formation of the consciousness that life is transient, is a journey to be taken. Micah also keeps in mind that the natural vocation of the chosen people is to walk, to journey; and that it was during the exodus, walking with God, that these people became a nation and achieved goods and prosperity in the promised land. However, when humanity loses its direction, becomes alienated and tries to fix its roots, as if its life on earth were eternal. This alienation leads to losing sight of God, to deviating from the path and the company of God, and consequently to committing immoral acts towards one’s neighbor, to corruption in relation to money, to the search for fame, recognition, to the point of worshipping others gods (Mic 1).

Micah denounces this corrupt and deviant behavior (Mic 1-2), but offers a possibility of returning to the project of God, which implies walking, but not alone, nor in the company of whoever, but walking with God as in the experience of the exodus (Mic 6:8). There are many ways of walking with God; for example, in the

desert, while walking with God, the people often walked in disbelief, murmuring or putting God to the test, that is, with arrogance and hostility towards God (Ex 15:24; 16:2.7.8; 17:3; Nm 14:2; 27:29.36; 16:11; 17:6.20); attitude which, in a certain way, is similar to that of the authorities and the leaders of the chosen people at the time of Micah.

Micah recommends an appropriate way to walk with God, which many Bibles translate as ‘humbly’. The term that Micah uses, however, is a hapax, that is, it appears only once in the Bible and is not very easy to translate and interpret. The meaning of “humbly” in Micah does not have much to do with “humilitas”, in the sense of self-humiliation, related to the humus, as the virtue of those who submit to any authority. Therefore the Latin Bible, better known as the Vulgate, prefers to translate this term with “sollicitum”, that is, with solicitude.

The term used by Micah refers to solicitude, care, and caution. Therefore, to have God as the only Lord means to walk with solicitude, that is to say, showing interest, readiness, willingness, care or zeal, willing to accept and promptly practice the commitments of the covenant. In this way, Micah wants to oppose the attitude of those who walk with God with arrogance and without committing themselves, despising his precepts, his laws, his statutes and his covenant (Mic 3). To walk humbly with God, in other words, is to walk in fidelity and committed to his Word of God and to his teachings, always ready and attentive to discern in the signs of the times, what is in favor of the defense and promotion of life and human dignity .

6. Consecrated for the mission with migrants and refugees

To be consecrated for the mission with the migrants implies having in mind and heart the serious migratory crisis that we are

facing today; but it also means to commit to the search for concrete means to help migrants and refugees; as well as trying to eradicate the causes that force so many people to leave their country and their family, often ending up marginalized and rejected. From us and from our communities, concrete actions should arise which should have an impact on the laws on migrants, promoting a mentality where they are considered not as numbers but as persons with their rights and their dignity.

Today more than ever, we are morally called to implement actions which promote the recognition of the humanity of migrants and refugees, so that they can be welcomed with humanity and integrated with dignity. The mission with migrants also commits us to fight against the construction of barriers, the spread of the ‘fear of others’ and the denial of assistance to those who aspire to a legitimate improvement for themselves and their families.

For the prophet Micah, walking with God does not mean closing the eyes to the world and opening them up for an intimate mystic. Walking with the God of migrants means committing oneself to the cause of the most vulnerable, which implies the pursuit of social justice. The humility to which Micah refers is not the humiliation of the human being and is not related to being *humus*, but it refers to submission solely to the authority of God or rather to the recognition of a unique authority and sovereignty, which is that of God.

In an attitude of listening and solicitude towards God’s calls, in the proposal of the reorganization we recognize an invitation and, at the same time, an appeal to the whole congregation and to each Sister, to a profound spiritual renewal and of the consecrated life in view of the mission with migrants and refugees.

From an ecclesiological perspective, the Church's actions for the renewal or the "reorganization" of consecrated religious life are equally interpreted as a "journey of exodus": "The consecrated have truly been on a "journey of exodus." This has been a time of enthusiasm and audacity, of inventiveness and creative fidelity..." (CICLSAL, *Keep watch*, p.15)

The Second Vatican Council began a real process of renewal of the Consecrated Religious Life, starting from the decree *Perfectae Caritatis* and from the dogmatic constitution *Lumen gentium*, in which we note a paradigmatic shift in the concept of the Church, which is no longer considered only as "the mystical body of Christ", but is now better understood as God's people, "a people united in the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" (LG, 4). The identity of the Church, therefore, is based on Christ and his Spirit and, at the same time, addresses social, cultural and anthropological situations.

The same inspiration guided the decree *Perfectae Caritatis*, reaffirming the ultimate meaning of Consecrated Life: "Since the ultimate norm of the religious life is the following of Christ set forth in the Gospels, let this be held by all institutes as the highest rule" (PC, 2a). Although the statement seems very generic and obvious, it has generated a movement of radical purification of the institutes of consecrated life with regard to the crystallized structures and practices concerning the imitation of their founders.

In reality, the missionary congregations were born, mostly, at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, a time of great and important reforms in the Church, in which for the first time a Pope, Leo XIII, wrote about social issues, in the famous

encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, “Of the new things”². Which are these new things? The turn of the century has brought many new features, starting with the industrial revolution, the replacement of human labor by machine, the growth of poverty, the increase of migration, the separation of families, and so on. It was in this context that we and other congregations were born, specifically, to heal the wounds of migration by offering access to education, health, asylum for the elderly without families and religious formation.

Over time those migrants settled down, but our structures remained and, in many cases, even if they were still necessary, they were no longer at the service of migrants, who were beginning to follow other routes; and the charism became a little blurred. For this reason, the whole conciliar movement for the renewal of the Church and consecrated life was a great breath of the Spirit that led us to the peripheries, to suburbs, to the cane plantations, to the favelas, to the frontiers and the missions in personal parishes. It has led us to rediscover the meaning of our charism and our mission, giving rise in our institute to reflections about an internal renewal regarding formation, lifestyle, fraternal life, religious habit and apostolate.

In recent years, however, the impulse of this journey seems to have lost its vigour. “The cloud appears to enclose more darkness than fire, but the fire of the Spirit still dwells in it ... It is always a question, in faith, of starting out on *an unknown voyage* (Wis 18:3; *Keep Watch*, p.16), which we call reorganization.

² Addressing issues such as the primacy of human person, its dignity, its rights [...] and its freedoms; [...] the family, its vocation and its rights; insertion and responsible participation of every person in social life; the promotion of peace, the economic system and private initiative, the role of the State, human work, the political community, the common good and its promotion, respecting the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity; the universal destiny of the goods of nature and its care with the preservation and defense of the environment; the integral development of each person and of the peoples; the primacy of justice and charity.

We are aware that a reorganization is necessary, in view of the revitalization of our fraternal life and mission; consequently we are also certain that “Consecrated life opens itself to renewal not because it follows self-generated initiatives, nor out of a mere desire for novelty, and much less because of a reductive focus on urgent sociological matters. Mainly, in fact, it does so out of responsible obedience to the creator Spirit, who “speaks through the prophets” and to the promptings of the Church’s magisterium” (CICLSAL, *Keep watch*, p. 22).

We were born to inspire new paths, to offer unexpected journeys, to respond easily to the needs of humanity and of the Spirit. We were born as an alternative, counter-current way of being and living. We were born to stand at the side of the most vulnerables, the disadvantaged, the excluded, to “defend the life, the faith and the rights” of migrants and refugees. Let’s not allow obsolete structures, sterile practices and social needs to convert our EVANGELICAL RESPONSES into pure business efficiency or passing fashions.

We are aware that the reorganization is already taking place in a structural, juridical and economic way, but this is not enough. It is necessary that the reorganization revitalizes our fraternal life, our life of community prayer, our sacramental experience, our sense of belonging, our way of responding to the need of migrants, our dreams and hopes, our prophetism and our deepest desire *to wake up the world*. Certainly, as intelligent, astute, empowered and organized women, we will be able to find the right way.

May we respond with creative fidelity to the call that God addresses to us: “Walk!”. That we can be open and willing to accept and respond with generosity to God’s new calls to move towards migrants, in defense of a dignified life and a safe, regular and orderly

migration. That, following the example of Blessed Scalabrini, we can contemplate the face of Christ in migrants and, like Blessed Assunta Marchetti and Venerable Servant of God Fr. Marchetti, we can consume our life, for love, serving the Lord in the migrants and refugees, living the mystique of the journey.

Sharing:

- In what way “walking humbly with our God” is to adjust our step with that of God who always desires to “make all things new”?
- What does it mean for me to be consecrated for the mission with migrants and refugees?
- What did I learn from my experience of itinerancy?
- How do I live the mystique of itinerancy in my daily life?
- In my opinion, what is missing for the reorganization to be effective also in the dimension of the renewal of the spiritual life and of the consecrated life, starting from the following of Jesus Christ (sequela Christi)?

“Walk humbly with your God”

Lectio Divina Mic 6,8

Introduction

The Prophet Micah lived in a situation which is similar to what we experience today in relation to the emancipation from faith and the exploitation of the most vulnerable. His vocation was born from the reality of the people (Mic 3:8). His oracles alternate between condemnation and salvation, and are addressed to both the leaders and the people, urging them to address the need for a reorganization of life, spirituality, organizations and social practices, making it clear that reorganization will only be effective if it is centered on God and on the covenant.

At the time of Micah, in the VIII century BC, the chosen people was divided into two kingdoms. Although he was a native of the southern kingdom, born in a small farming town called Morasti, he prophesied for the two kingdoms. Both Israel and Judah, seduced by the power of foreign peoples, had lost the centrality of their faith and, progressively, had abandoned the values and principles of the people of God, whose vocation was to be a blessing for all nations (Gen 12: 1-4). In fact, Israel and Judah lived in the shadow of the Assyrian, Egyptian and Babylonian Empires, with their respective gods and cults.

In possession of the land, the chosen people lived a short period of prosperity and wellbeing, but soon made an alliance with these foreign powers and was persuaded by false promises, false divinities and false practices. The oracles of Micah reveal a perverse society subjected to corrupt and dishonest authorities: “They covet fields, and seize them; houses, and they take them; They cheat an owner of his house, a man of his inheritance” (Mic 2:2)

Not even the religious leaders were innocent, since even priests and prophets were selfish and deceptive: “Who build up Zion with bloodshed, and Jerusalem with wickedness! Her leaders render judgment for a bribe, her priests give decisions for a salary, her prophets divine for money” (Mic 3: 10-11)

All these aberrations had weakened the faith and even the sovereignty of the people of God, putting the country and the covenant with God at risk. The Assyrian attack in northern Israel was only a matter of time. The fear of the people caused a mass flight of the Israelites to the kingdom of Judah. The migrants joined the poor, who should be protected by the local authorities and who, due to their vulnerability, were the most exploited “They eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from them, and break their bones” (Mic 3:3), going against the law of God (Deut 10: 17-19).

In this scenario, the prophet Micah urges his listeners to what is really important in life and for life: “to practice justice, to love piety, to walk humbly with your God” (Mic 6,8).

Chapter 6 of Micah is written in juridical terms, and its structure corresponds to the literary genre of the dispute, which belongs to a judicial environment characterized by a bilateral conflict, which seeks to resolve cases, situations of protest, civil and criminal conflicts. In this bilateral scheme, the debate develops until a clarification is reached between the two parties. The argument of the debate should have a common background or a common experience; often there is a relationship of alliance, of mutual knowledge, a relationship of kinship and much affinity.

God is on the side of those who have been harmed. He suffers for the betrayals of the people he chose to be his own people, separating it from other peoples and establishing with it a perpetual covenant. His language is extremely affectionate, expressing an

unconditional and immeasurable love, but at the same time he is embittered by the direction that the relationship with his people has taken. The Lord knows that the covenant needs to be clarified, so he intervenes to claim what belongs to him, that is, reciprocity in love.

READING: Mic 6:1-8

HEAR, then, what the LORD says:

Arise, present your plea before the mountains,
and let the hills hear your voice!

² Hear, O mountains, the plea of the LORD,
pay attention, O foundations of the earth!
For the LORD has a plea against his people,
and he enters into trial with Israel.

³ O my people, what have I done to you,
or how have I wearied you? Answer me!

⁴ For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, f
rom the place of slavery I released you;
And I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

⁵ 1 My people, remember what Moab's King Balak planned,
and how Balaam, the son of Beor, answered him . . .
from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know
the just deeds of the LORD.

⁶ With what shall I come before the LORD,
and bow before God most high?
Shall I come before him with holocausts,
with calves a year old?

⁷ Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
with myriad streams of oil?
Shall I give my first-born for my crime,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

⁸ You have been told, O man, what is good,

and what the LORD requires of you:
Only to do right and to love goodness,
and to walk humbly with your God.

MEDITATION:

In verses 1-2 the whole creation is invoked as a witness in favor of God. This juridical process between God and his people acquires a cosmic dimension; after all the whole creation is the work of the one God (Gn 1:1-2. 4) and testifies to his immeasurable love for humanity (Gen 2:8). The mountains are par excellence the places of God's meetings with his people; for example the Sinai, where the commandments were given and the covenant sealed (Ex 24:1-11); the Nebo from where the promised land could be seen (Nm 32:49); Mount Ebal where Joshua built an altar for the Lord after the possession of the land (GS 8:30). Even the foundations of the earth are summoned, since it was from the bowels of the earth that God created humanity in his infinite love (Gen 2: 7).

The argument of the Lord is essentially an accusation (vv. 3-5): "You have failed in the commitment of the relationship with me". While the contestation of the Lord is so lively and demanding in discussing a rejected love story, its language has an extraordinarily affectionate intonation. In fact, when we read "My people, what have I done to you?", the possessive "my people" expresses the maximum of the emotional tension and a strong evocation of the covenant, "I will walk among you, I will be your God and you will be my people" (Lv 26:12).

Like a father who wonders about his failures in the education of his rebellious son, or like a passionate husband who wonders where love was lacking for his wife to leave him, the Lord asks Israel: "What have I done to you? How have I wearied you?"(v. 3)

Taking his people to look into the past, the Lord wonders if it was a mistake to have freed it from Egypt, rescuing it from slavery and guiding it to the promised land, providing everything for it during the journey in the desert (vv. 4-5 ; Ex 6:7). The Lord emphatically begs his people to remember how He has always stood by his side, making himself known and protecting it, even in the most critical moments, when foreign kings wanted to prevent the access to the promised land (Nm 22-24).

In the oracle, a voice expresses the conscience of the people (vv. 6-7), which this time seems to have realized the situation and does not know how to mend its fault: “How shall I present myself to the Lord, how shall I bow before the God of heaven?” The interlocutor asks himself which sacrifice would be suitable: holocausts, expiation, reparations, libations (Lv 1-7), or the offering of the firstborn as pleasing to the Canaanite gods (Lv 18:21). It seems that there was no understanding. The Lord is inflamed with passion; but the offerings of the interlocutor would have the purpose of placating the wrath of God; his feeling of guilt is so great that he believes that God is angry.

The prophet intervenes, therefore, to clarify the question. God is not angry but inflamed with passion. What he likes are not bloody sacrifices, but a spiritual religion characterized by the demands that have already been announced: right (Amos), faithfulness (Hosea), humility before God (Isaiah). The Lord wants an interpersonal relationship, face to face, a relationship of mutual and faithful love. The Lord needs neither things nor sacrifices. He loves and is jealous (Ex 34: 14); for this as He commits himself to love, he expects that we too commit ourselves with Him, in a total abandonment of ourselves (Heb 10: 5-10). He wants to be our companion in the journey and for this is enough to “humbly walk with your God”.

CONTEMPLATION:

Journey as itinerancy: The Traditio Scalabriniana (n° 1, 2005)

The imperative of Micah: “Walk humbly with your God” is an invitation to reflect on our mission and spirituality as consecrated for the migrants and refugees. Since it is impossible to love God without loving our neighbor (1 Jn 4:20-21), love for God is incompatible with injustice, indifference and stability. Just like the prophet, we cannot be indifferent and insensitive to the cause of the most needy.

As Scalabrinians, walking with God means committing ourselves to welcome, protect, promote and include migrants and refugees, that is, to love those whom God loves: “God loves the stranger and gives him bread and clothes. Love the stranger therefore, for you also were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Deut 10: 18-19).

The whole biblical tradition bears witness to God’s preferential love for migrants. He himself became a migrant with the migrants and converted a multitude of migrants (Ex 12:38) into a people that is called to have as its principles the acceptance and hospitality: “You shall treat the stranger who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; have the same love for him as for yourself; for you too were once strangers in the land of Egypt. I, the LORD, am your God” (Lv 19: 34).

According to Micah, what God requires of us are not bloody sacrifices, but the practice of justice (Mk 6: 8). A just society according to the divine plan, is a society which takes care of the most vulnerable, which does not abandon the orphan, the migrant, and the widow: “The Levite who has no share in the heritage with you, and also the alien, the orphan and the widow who belong to your community, may come and eat their fill; so that the LORD,

your God, may bless you in all that you undertake” (14:29). In the same vein as Micah, Jesus enlarges the list of the vulnerable and reminds that the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the one who has nothing to wear, the sick, the prisoner who knocks on our door, is Jesus himself, who asks to be met and helped (Mt 25, 31-45).

To walk humbly with God is to live itinerancy, detachment, provisionality and this implies a reflection on our obsolete structures and the administration of the goods that limit our service in favor of migrants and refugees. The call to walk humbly with God is also an invitation to the renewal of spiritual life and of consecrated life, starting from the following of Jesus Christ, the migrant par excellence. Christ pitches his tent in the bosom of humanity to become a pilgrim among us and with us. In Christ, God takes a new step towards humanity, but in order to have a salvific encounter we must also take steps to meet Christ, present in every migrant and refugee.

Our Founder and Co-founders

Blessed Scalabrini is described as a man of walking, who did not set his abode in the episcopal palace, for he was always willing to walk, to go further, to be available to what God could still ask him, through the most needy he met along the way. In fact, Bishop Scalabrini was frequently on the road, driven by a mysterious ardor that made him walk without hesitation to make known the phenomenon of migration throughout Italy. More than a missionary bishop, Scalabrini was a citizen of the world, open to meeting everyone, authorities and peasants. During his episcopate he visited the 365 parishes in the Piacenza Diocese, as well as the Scalabrinian missions in Brazil, Argentina and United States, with the means that were then accessible to him: horse, mule, ship, boat, or on foot. Without regretting the fatigues and deprivations, Scalabrini

experienced the itinerancy walking with God for the love of the migrants (cf. M. G. LUISE, *Traditio Scalabriniana*, n.3, 2006)

The venerable servant of God, Fr. José Marchetti, is described by Fr. Faustino as a person who was always running from town to town, from farm to farm, forgetting himself and dedicated to the holy idea of founding an orphanage. Fatigue was his joy, privations his greatest satisfactions, refusals and contradictions were his most precious treasures. Father José Marchetti was very popular and he was everywhere, both in the coffee plantations of the interior of São Paulo, and in the center of the cities; wherever he passed, he left a grateful memory. His letters are eloquent testimonies of his readiness, his itinerancy, and how he walked steadily and humbly in the presence of God. It was in the heart of God that he found confirmation of the foundation of the orphanage to welcome the most vulnerable among the migrants.

Blessed Assunta Marchetti was always ready to walk, to be itinerant. Like Abraham, she left her land and emigrated to an unknown land, without ever returning. She incarnated passionately the Scalabrinian charism and defended the identity of the Congregation with all her energies. She lived her itinerancy throughout Brazil leaving traces of her sanctity and humility. As an exemplary model of those who humbly walk with God, she loved the migrant orphans to the extreme and for them consumed her life.

Pope Francis

The mission of the Church is animated by a spirituality of *continuous exodus*. It is a question of “going forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the “peripheries” in need of the light of the Gospel” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 20). The mission of the Church encourages an attitude of *continuous pilgrimage* through the various deserts of life, through the various experiences of hunger and

thirst for truth and justice. The mission of the Church inspires an experience of *continuous exile* so that the person thirsting for the infinite can experience his condition of exiled on his way to the definitive homeland, suspended between the “already” and “not yet” of the Kingdom of Heaven. (Pope Francis, World Missions Day, 2017).

- **Sharing:**
- How did Blessed Scalabrini, the Venerable Servant of God, Fr. Joseph Marchetti and Blessed Assunta Marchetti, live the itinerancy, walking humbly with God?
- What journey does our congregation need to undertake so that our works and structures are at the service of migrants and refugees?
- What are the concrete exercises I do in my daily life to be ready to assume with freedom the mission that the Lord has entrusted to me in the Congregation?
- Is not this the time to leave for a discovery of something new, starting from the current situation? What does the Spirit suggest me?

Evangelical Itinerancy in the MSCS Congregation

Sr. Lice Maria Signor, mscs

Evangelical itinerancy has always had everything to do with the future of the women's Scalabrinian Institute. The being itinerant shelters the deepest sense of the mscs history. In migrating in the visible contemporariness of the Scalabrinian mission, the Institute renews itself, becomes stronger, goes beyond and proceeds in time.

Together with contents of accurate history and chronological summaries of the mscs historical evolution, the question of identity persists; redimensioning needs greater expressiveness, new reorganization is needed. After studies done in recent years we have arrived at the definition of elements of the common basis of conduct, identified as Scalabrinian. From this analysis of the way of being and acting results the knowledge of the columns on which the mscs congregation is built. It is assumed that they are massive, once she survived for 122 years, but the institution is not static.

So, that to be a Missionary Sister of St. Charles, Scalabrinian, supposes to have an itinerant attitude. The two verbs TO BE and TO HAVE preserve us from the risk to remain without identity, fossilized, which would be denial of us. The itinerancy is part of the nature of the Institute and expresses itself as attitude which is effective and comprehensive, physical and mental, individual and collective and giving life and consistency to the mission.

For all the institutions of the Scalabrinian family, the evangelical itinerancy becomes future beginning with the sad scene witnessed by Scalabrini in Milan's central train station: "They were emigrants... Since that day it frequently came to my mind those unhappy souls ...

How to remedy this?"³ This itinerant attitude of mind and heart, under the action of the Spirit, Scalabrini translated it into project, completed step by step.

In the genesis of the Scalabrinian work as a whole, the intention to give life to a service with the brothers and sisters in mobility is clear, in order to assure a more dignified and Christian future. From these inspiring sources comes the evangelical itinerancy that has configured the physiognomy of the women's Scalabrinian congregation.

The mscs presence with the migrants of different cultures and ethnicities has favored a greater awareness of the identity. The conviction that to operate in the diverse migration situations we become exactly what we are called to be, also justifies the geographic expansion of the Institute, the **ITINERANT SERVICE**, which needs to be encouraged and implemented. On the historical evolution of the women's institution it is noted that it "expands itself or enters into crisis, as it approaches or moves away from the Scalabrinian project".⁴ In other words, to the extent that the mscs congregation makes itself "outgoing Church", timely progress, with consequential periods of revival occurs.

Scrolling through apostolic itineraries to facilitate a better life for many persons, the Institute opened doors toward its own future. This was since the beginning and in the course of successive sixennials. It strengthens in us the **BE ITINERANT**, since it recuperates a peculiarity that has solid roots in the history of the Institute, founded

³ SCALABRINI, Giovanni B. L'emigrazione italiana in America. In: Scritti, vol. I, p. 19-22.

⁴ SIGNOR, Lice Maria. João Batista Scalabrini e a migração italiana. Um projeto sócio-pastoral. p. 250.

on October 25, 1895. The first step of a journey made evangelical itinerancy precede this day.

"The place of departure of the pioneer group of the Missionary Sisters of St. Charles, Scalabrinians was Camaiore, a commune of the city of Lucca situated in the region of Tuscany, Central Italy, which comprises a geographical-historical scenario of rare particularities, differentiated as natural beauty and as a past worthy to be remembered in history. Leaving this pleasant corner, on 23 October 1895 the first four mscs Sisters traveled 24 kilometers between Camaiore and Lucca, the initial stretch of a long itinerary to be fulfilled by a nascent institution that, through them, began to express it that day. From the car that drove them, already far from home and friends, from a distance they saw the Alps and recognized, closer and visible signs of autumn in the vegetation that was familiar to them. Next stop was Piacenza, the fundamental step of the heroic path".⁵

A providential record of this beginning written by Fr. Eugenio Benedetti who accompanied the group guided by Father Joseph Marchetti, clarifies the link of this initiative with the project of John Baptist Scalabrini and gives evidence of the itinerant aspect that distinguishes the early history of the mscs. At dawn of October 23, 1895, these left Camaiore: Carolina Ghilarducci Marchetti and her daughter Assunta Marchetti, accompanied by Angela Larini and Maria Franceschini. Having completed the agenda in Piacenza, where the four Sisters made their temporary vows, the group continued the trip to the port of Genoa where they began the crossing of the sea from Italy to Brazil and carried out, on the high seas, the first pastoral fruits of the nascent institution. Soon after, the Christopher Columbus orphanage was opened in the city of São

⁵ SIGNOR, Lice Maria. Itinerant Service. March 2017.p. 1 e 2.

Paulo, in Brazil, the orphans were receiving in this locale an exemplar welcome and professional qualification. From the beginning, on sea and in a foreign land they had as companion of the successive ' pilgrimages ', the Crucifix received from the Founder".⁶

The first twelve-years of the history of the new institute, which are part of its foundational process, should have been of internal organization. In reality it was a time of loss: the death of Father Joseph Marchetti; the withdrawal, for family reasons, of Carolina Marchetti; and the death of two pioneers, Angela and Maria. Despite these enormous obstacles the mission in the Christopher Columbus was accomplished. The institution, however, needed to complete its foundation process, going through an internal restructuring.

This was the first reorganization in the mscs history which began in 1907. On the 22 of September of this year it was decided to separate the Missionary Sisters of St. Charles, from the Apostle Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The merger of the two institutions had been a misguided attempt to solve emergencies of the moment. At the time, one did not have the notion of the deeper meaning of a charisma that we have today, its importance for the history of the Church at all times and the need to respect the purpose of the origin of each Institute. Once the split was decided, the mscs, numbering only nine, remained under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of São Paulo, Duarte Leopoldo e Silva who in the following year became the first Archbishop of São Paulo.

Bishop Duarte took over the restructuring of the Scalabrinian women's Institute with strict regulations, which required of the mscs a time of change in their everyday life. All should make the regular novitiate. This formative stage began in April 1910 and lasted until

⁶ Ibidem, p. 2.

January 1, 1912, date in which they made the perpetual profession and received the ring that distinguishes us even today. During this time, sister Fulgência Huysmans, a Belgian religious of St. Vincent de Paula was superior and mistress. Spiritual director was father Lourenço Hubbauer, a Redemptorist priest. Other important steps of the reorganization were the drafting of constitutions, approved on April 16, 1914 by Bishop Duarte Leopoldo e Silva who respected the purpose of the origin and retained the core elements of the scalarinian women's Institute; the appointment of mother Assunta Marchetti as superior General for six years; the missionary expansion in the State of São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul; the Foundation of a novitiate and the formation of new members; the juridical personality of the institution, with the publication of the statutes of the educational, instructive and charitable Society.

Despite signs of solidity that resulted from the reorganization that took place between 1907 and 1914, a crisis of identity with nationalist base, showing deficiencies in the formation of some sisters, divided the institution into two groups, missionaries of Saint Charles, in number of 40 and Clementines, who were 19. The crisis required new reordering of the Institute, a process that lasted for about ten years, from 1925-1935. During this decade and in successive years, until 1947, the congregation was under the Apostolic See, being dependent of the consistorial congregation, today called the congregation of the Bishops.

Determinations from Rome during this period, were of great importance: maintenance of the name, fidelity to the origin and purpose of the institution; organization of the Scalabrinian women's Institute into two regions known as provinces, one in São Paulo, another in Rio Grande do Sul, both with their respective provincial superior and Council; election and appointment of mother Assunta

as superior general, according to guidance received from the Consistorial; opening of a second novitiate in Rio Grande do Sul; compilation of new constitutions in order to adapt them to the code of Canon law of 1917 and to the new reality of the institution; missionary expansion, according to the indication of the Consistorial; approval by the Apostolic See; the revised Constitutions and the consequent recognition of the Scalabrinian women's Institute, as of Pontifical right, a fact which occurred in January 1934. These steps demonstrate the dynamics of a charisma, the evangelical itinerancy which characterizes it.

40 years after its foundation the Institute returned to live a more propitious time: reordered for a second time, consolidated, widespread in two Brazilian States, São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul and at the vespers of settling itself in Italy and in the United States. In 1935 there were 23 communities, 120 sisters and counted with 29 novices in two novitiates of the institution.

In the year of 1936 the mscs congregation carried out an old aspiration of the first sisters: to revitalize the Scalabrinian "to be", by assimilating the spirit and vitality of the Founder. The successful return to Italy had this goal. Soon a novitiate was opened there and a new province was constituted, headquartered in Piacenza. Five years later, in 1941, always with the mediation and support of the Scalabrinian confreres, the first mission in the United States was opened, where a novitiate was also opened and a new province was created, the fourth of the Scalabrinian women's congregation, with headquarters in Melrose Park, Illinois.

In the decades of 1950 and 1960 the Institute grew much more in number of members and communities, with higher concentration of mscs Sisters in São Paulo and in southern Brazil where, in these twenty years, the Congregation distanced itself from the

foundational Evangelical intention, requiring urgent reforms. In good time the II Ecumenical Vatican Council proposed a process of renewal to all the consecrated persons.

The proposed changes, carried out under the guidance of the Church, counted with a broad participation of the religious institutes. In the mscs congregation the renewal process was put into action in the early 1970. Nearly five decades later, we can be proud to note, the harmony of that time, of the mscs sisters with the determinations of the Church and of how they knew to identify priority issues, to reinterpret the charisma in the double dimension of the spirituality and mission, and to adhere to the Evangelical itinerancy as requirement of scalabrinian being and doing.

In the happy memories of those years, that many of us had the privilege to live, there is an outstanding unprecedented, harmonized and lasting contentment: for the rediscovery of the charisma of Foundation; for the documented recognition of our identity; for the universality of the mission, in the permanent contemporariness of the foundational historical matter.

Once the triple achievement was assured, the third most important process of reorganization was undertaken, this process, like the previous ones, included the drafting of new constitutions, adopted in June 1985; expressive missionary expansion; and edifying witnesses of evangelical itinerancy. Thanks to this, in the late 1970, local churches of the mid-western region of Brazil began to rely on the mscs missionary service, which gave visibility to the Scalabrinian charisma and contributed to creating awareness about the reality of internal migrations in country. In time, a new province of the Institute was formed.

Thereby the evangelical itinerancy reduced in part the concentration of mscs in southern Brazil, having the Congregation settled also in

Paraguay and Argentina in the years 1970. In new exoduses that marked the decade of 1980 ,Colombia, Mexico and other countries of Latin America, in addition to the Philippines in the Asian continent, counted with the presence of Scalabrinian Missionary Sisters.

Even though the fruits of the third reorganization undertaken by the Institute have been of the utmost expressiveness, the process resulted incomplete, becoming weaker over the years without performing the expected redemtioning of the apostolic works, nor the necessary deepening of Scalabrinian spirituality and without consistent answers to the urgencies in the field of human mobility

Today, three certainties, in particular, motivate the reorganization already underway: the visible contemporariness of the Scalabrinian women's institution that, called to live in "being and doing" the evangelical itinerancy, can no longer omit itself; the urgency of this propitious and providential moment; the collective will expressed with freedom in recent consultations, held in the Institute. At this time, we are invited to follow with decided adhesion the only way that leaves us home. At "Home", is to match the apostolic zeal and social sensitivity, as in the life and work of Scalabrini, mother Assunta Marchetti and Father Joseph Marchetti.

Itinerant Service

Sr. Lice Maria Signor, mscs

Never as in our days the signs of the time show with much eloquence the fields of the scalabrinian mission ready for the harvests on a global scale, inviting the Missionary Sisters of St. Charles Borromeo Scalabrinians (mscs) to a vigilant and renewing, individual and collective action. This mentioned action is capable of reaching the spaces and the core of their apostolic service, in such a way, that it is, as it has to be, itinerant and uninterrupted so that the daily journey becomes the journey that the Institute is called to go through.

According to the United Nations, the global migratory reality amounted to 258 million people in 2018. More than the numbers, the inhumane situations of migration flows, diversified and emerging as a service, impress in our days. Still, according to the United Nations the picture, mainly due to the consequences of the conflict that has been going on in Syria for six years, reproduces today "the greatest humanitarian crises" occurred since the end of the great World War II 1939-1945.

Our time, so marked by the clamorous actuality of the migratory phenomenon, with sinister trafficking of human beings, the rigid migration policies and the senseless walls erected in frontier areas by rich countries that could relieve emergencies in the context of human mobility, is, in fact, a permanent season of harvest.

On the other hand, in our era, any innovation, starting with technologies that accelerate people's lives, also requires a change in habits. It refers to families as well as, in general, to the planning of institutions. As a response the XIII General Chapter of the Institute of the Scalabrinian Missionary Women held in 2013, considered to

have an adequate internal reorganization acted upon from the IX General Assembly held in Turcifal, Portugal, from November 17 to 28, 2016.

Since the XIII General Chapter, five pillars on which we are trying to solidify the renewing process of the institution guide the journey of the Sister mscs and give rise to persistent appeals for requalification of the Institute: Jesus Christ, migrants, human relations, the culture of vocation and internal organization.

Among other ways to achieve a vigorous and profound renewal, the final document of the XIII General Chapter of 2013 indicates the empowerment of BEING ITINERANT in the life-action of the Sister mscs. It is an attitude that recovers the essential value of consecration, broadens the vision of the world, makes itself available for the exercise of the mission in the current "stations of Milan" and rescues a peculiarity that has a stable root in the history of the Institute, founded on October 25, 1895 in Italy; Brazil was the first destination.

From the beginning to now, an appeal reappears amid crucial moments of the life of the institution mscs and, with greater force after the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican which guided religious institutes to an effective return to their origins. It was based on this orientation that the Institute of the Scalabrinian Missionary Women chose the Planet as a missionary space and established the migratory field, with its diversified situations, as a theological place of the mission that was entrusted by the Church. The importance of the decisions and the will of a good number of Sisters is to recover an appearance in an itinerant way of being; the history mscs has passed decades without recording the expected change.

We note, in this regard, that the idea of sending teams of sisters mscs to places where the reality of migration is quite intense,

and the service is urgent, is contained in documents issued from chapters, assemblies, and meetings held after the Second Vatican Council. Among other records that express this intention, we recall two resolutions of the X General Chapter of 1995, determining the organization of "itinerant teams" to act "side by side" with migrants in any crises or emergencies, such as: "forced and massive exodus, motivated by armed conflicts, refugee camps, refugees and others...". Another resolution stated to provide the sisters with, "through a congregational volunteer project, to have a direct and meaningful experience of pastoral migration in works and activities..."⁷ Besides, for some years now the Institute has aspired to develop a missionary presence identified as the feminine face of its charism in the Church.

Now, from the force of this charism and the extraordinary relevance of the fact of migration, allied with the collective will expressed in successive regional meetings held after the General Chapter of 2013, a new missionary project is born. The greatness of the charism calls for a service of vigilance where the urgency is visible, and the presence mscs can touch the essence of the Scalabrinian mission. In response, the Institute includes in its program a special calling, identified as ITINERANT SERVICE. The membership to this program embraces the specific, it is adjusted to the current historical moment and confirms the more than centenary link between yesterday and today, between the past and the present projected towards the future.

"To participate in this adventure of specificity, the Scalabrinian missionary sister must gather some qualities: love for Jesus Christ present in the migrant, especially the most vulnerable, women and children, as requested by the witness of the feminine

7 RESOLUTIONS of X General Chapter in the celebration of the Centenary of the Congregation, 1995. Resolutions n.70 - 71, p. 26-27

face of the Scalabrinian charism. Steadiness in faith, hope in all trials, simplicity, modesty, inner joy, capacity for fraternal human relations, facility for languages and a profession that justifies her candidature to participate in the unity of itinerant service such as a nurse, social worker, anthropologist, sociologist, interpreter, translator...". All of this, however, without forgetting that "we are all sisters mscs, that we love each other for this reason and that the migrants are the horizon of our life and mission. And this should be enough for us." ⁸

With this expectation, the internal reorganization of the Institute considers the composition of a group of sisters mscs, that in a free and convinced adhesion, express their availability to walk Scalabrinian itineraries, fulfilling their mission "in loco", where migrants and refugees ask for an urgent service that responds immediately to their basic needs. It is crucial to keep in mind that the uprooting, characteristic of the Itinerant Service and understood as working fidelity to the charism, is sustained by the Word of God. It takes place in the openness that has become an interior attitude, in the readiness to walk concrete paths that the Providence when the time has come indicates and to the places where the Church sends, through the Institute.

ITINERANT SERVICE is, therefore, a way of "being a migrant with the migrant." It will be "as the sum, common action and expression of all the provinces" of the Congregation. The service will be challenged to live the unity in temporariness, to listen to the signs of the times through which God speaks, calls, and sends. The YES gives a response to the "desire for a specific project of the Congregation that wants to ensure a presence MSCS with migrants and refugees who live in emergencies. The YES-MSCS is

8 LEMOS Erta. Unit of Itinerant Service, São Paulo, October 16, 2016.

characterized by adequate flexibility, temporariness, and itinerancy, based on the current apostolic demands."⁹

Through these available fellow sisters, the YES of the Institute of the Scalabrinian Missionary Women will be in constant vigilance. It will give visibility to the urgencies experienced by the target groups, our brothers and sisters, it will provoke solidarity for the migratory cause and, "as an attentive sentinel, day after day, always ready, on his watchtower, will tell all that he sees."¹⁰

The YES aims to prepare sisters in the different mission fields, including making it possible for them to have the necessary language skills, giving priority to the study of the English language. Sisters mscs will be sent to areas of steady migration flows, together with migrants and refugees, preferably women and children.¹¹ For this service, there is an own statute, a coordinator appointed by the General Superior, with delegation (by the General Superior) financing and support by the territorial provinces, collaboration with other institutions that provide similar services.

It is also important to remember here the final message of Pope Francis to consecrated men and women at the International Meeting held at the Vatican on January 28 and February 2, 2016. In this regard, the Supreme Pontiff says: "To be a sentinel, is necessary to accept to live in the expropriation of certainties, to learn to intuit with the heart in love and with eyes sees clearly at the plans of God..." In fact, only who sees clearly can see the beauty in forced camps and understand the meaning of "tents" transformed into

9 Rules of the Itinerant Service MSCS, approved in the meeting of the governments of the Congregation, Melrose Park IL, 16-22 April 2018, TITLE I, nn. 1-2.

10 Cf. Isaiah 21,6-8

11 Cf. Final document of the XIII General Chapter, 2013, p.5

balsam and blessing for those who live in tents of our time, under the presence of God and engaged in his project, become seeds of life.¹²

The process of the internal reorganization of the Institute follows the path inspired by the Spirit of God that due to his life-giving action, is capable of empowering the future of the institution - today as at the beginning, without interruptions or deviations. In the institution, the Itinerant Service constitutes an innovative way, substantial in the life and mission of the sister mscs. The path realized so far already demonstrates that the Institute of the Missionary Sisters of St. Charles Borromeo Scalabrinians, has never come so close to be itself, as it was thought at its origin by John Baptist Scalabrini, Mother Assunta and Father Joseph Marchetti.

12 Cf Nm 24, 1-9

PRAYERS

in preparation for the XIV General Chapter

Prayer I

FATHER, your caring attentive gaze accompanies the missionary trajectory of our Congregation. We thank you for your providential designs that guide our steps by set paths. Moved by FAITH, we entrust to your care the internal reorganization process of the Institute and the Itinerant Service that makes your presence and action of your grace, in us, more visible in the Church and in the world. Now, Father, inspire the preparation, the accomplishment and the decisions of the XIV General Chapter. We ask that, through these, the course initiated by the internal reorganization of the Congregation may be brought to a successful conclusion. We know that you expect from us to WALK HUMBLY with YOU. This is the root of a renewed and vigorous future for our Institute.

LORD JESUS, as in the early days of the mscs congregation, you are the way to be followed in its contemporary journeys. The called by name wants us to be “CONSECRATED FOR THE MISSION WITH THE MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES.” Make us diligent in safeguarding the inherited charism, which, through us, extends your presence with the brothers and sisters in mobility. Your walking side by side with us reverses situations such as in Emmaus. Educate our hearts and minds. Mold us in solidarity and without pretensions, determined to open spaces to the HOPE that springs from the redeeming Cross and gives evangelical meaning to the sufferings of so many migrants and refugees of our time.

HOLY SPIRIT, the exoduses caused by the dehumanization of persons cry for justice and love, which can be attained also through the living of the Scalabrinian charism, gift of your vitality and living

strength capable of transforming institutions and the world. Spirit of God, restore the congregation from within so that, in its reorganization, it may keep the focus on its spirituality and mission. May CHARITY that has its source in You, form us in hospitality, evangelical itinerancy and communion in diversity, attitudes that well identify us as Scalabrinian Missionary Sisters.

Ir. Lice Maria Signor, mscs

Prayer II

Holy God, we adore you! Your loving gaze is regenerating strength for all humanity that you guide and orient “*Behold, I make a new thing: right now, it germinates, don't you understand?*” (Is 43: 19). At this time, in which, we prepare our-selves for the XIV General Chapter, we ask you to nourish in us the hope which makes us walk the roads of the exodus, with new, humble and bold steps.

Blessed John Baptist Scalabrini, you educated us to hear the passing of God who prepares a new humanity with the “*Providence of a father, towards the goal*”. You who with open hands sow hope among migrants, invoke for each of us, your daughters, a new and brave missionary station. “*Consecrated for the mission with the migrants and refugees*”¹³, because the harvest is plentiful...!

Venerable Fr. Joseph Marchetti: you were a giant of charity, guide us on the roads of the hearts of the migrants without energy and without wealth, without pride and without the vanity to announce with humility and joy that Jesus is the Savior of the world. In this

¹³ Blessed J.B. Scalabrini. “Seeds emigrate on the wings of the winds... but more than anything else man migrates, led by Divine Providence”.

time of *internal reorganization of the Congregation*, may we preserve the peace of heart and protect the joy of the *Deo gratias!*

Blessed Assunta Marchetti: Makes us women of silence to utter words full of God. Grant us to walk hurriedly to the encounter of the most fragile and neglected persons, like you, to devote ourselves to the care of the persons who are tried by injustice and pain. Obtain for us the grace to "*walk humbly with our God*" (Cf. Mi 6: 8) and to be a welcoming house of refugees and migrants.

Mary, you who lived with Jesus the sorrows of the exile, take our prayer before God and return to us as blessings to fulfill, in us, the wonders of a renewed Pentecost and so that we will be able take care of the most vulnerable migrants who are at the extreme of their strength. Amen

Ir. Giuliana Maria Bosini, mscs

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