

Piccole Suore Missionarie della Carità
(Don Orione)
Casa generale
Via Monte Acero, 5 – 00141 Roma
www.suoredonorione.org



*LMSC, 100 years:
“...gratitude... passion... hope...
to wake up the world!”
(Pope Francis)*

Prot. MG 51/15

DEAR SISTERS,

A few weeks ago, the Liturgy gave us the text of the Gospel of Luke *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because he has anointed me and sent me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and sight to the blind; to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim an year of grace of the Lord”* (Lk 4,18-19). They are the words of the prophet Isaiah that Jesus proclaims at the beginning of His preaching and summarizes in a beautiful way His prophetic and messianic mission.

In the context of these words of the Gospel, that I feel strongly addressed to us, to our communities, to our works and services, to our missions: *“the Spirit of the Lord is upon us... He sends us ... He proclaims to us a year of the grace of the Lord!”*, I announce with deep joy, **to all the Little Missionary sisters of Charity**, and also to the whole orionine family, friends, families and benefactors, **THE OPENING OF THE JUBILEE YEAR, IN WHICH, WITH GRATEFUL SPIRIT, WE WILL CELEBRATE THE CENTENARY OF FOUNDATION AND THAT WILL CLOSE ON DECEMBER 8TH. 2015, SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE VIRGIN MARY.**

WITH A GRATEFUL HEART...

The joyful celebration of the Centenary of our foundation is, without doubt, the joy that comes from a **“grateful memory”** for what the Lord has done through our holy Founder Don Orione, but specially for those who, with great faith and trust, welcomed his message and adhered to his ideals: *“go, sow the charity of Jesus Christ with the words, with your work, sacrifice yourself, make holocaust of your life... bend with charitable sweetness to the understanding of children, of the poor, of the humble... because in the most miserable of men shines the image of God”*¹.

Resound more strongly in our hearts the words of Pope Francis in the Apostolic Letter to consecrated people: *“During this Year, it would be appropriate for each charismatic family to reflect on its origins and history, in order to thank God who grants the Church a variety of gifts which embellish her and equip her for every good work. Recounting our history is essential for preserving our identity, for strengthening our unity as a family and our common senses of belonging. More than an exercise in archaeology or the cultivation of mere nostalgia, 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, beginning with the founders and foundresses and the first communities”*².

So, the beginning of the Jubilee Year means for all the LMSC, the beginning of a year in which our love for the orionine vocation received, for the Congregation and charisma, becomes *“thanksgiving”*, memory and amazement, joy and celebration.

¹ Cfr. Constitutions of the LMSC, Art. 41-42.

² Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter to all Consecrated people, on the occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life, Vatican, 21-11-2014.

Do not miss this year the reminder and the gratitude for the many “**yes**”, generous and full, that gave the sisters, from the beginning until now, for the courage and sacrifice that provided a foundation to what we now are and have, for the generosity of the first “*missionaries ad gentes*” and many others who went to bring Christ and charism in the distant lands of America, Europe, Africa and Asia.

Thank the Lord for the sanctity of life of Sister M. Plautilla, of Mother M. Tarcisia, of Sister M. Bontà, and so many others who, perhaps, we have known and enjoyed their witness of a life true, beautiful and good.

Thank for the pass of obedience to the Second Vatican Council, for the opening and training proposals for renewal, for the tireless efforts of expansion and intercultural communion, and for the creativity of charity through the many services with which we operate in the world ...

This “**grateful memory**” is, like the Pope says, “*a way 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. We may also encounter cases of inconsistency, the result of human weakness and even at times a neglect of some essential aspects of the charism. Yet everything proves instructive and, taken as a whole, acts as a summons to conversion. To tell our story is to praise God and to thank him for all his gifts.*”³.

“**WITH REDEEMING PASSION ...**”!

Certainly, this “**grateful memory**” does not remain stationery, fixed in the “*past*”, but becomes a source of new impulse, of renewed enthusiasm, ardent and courageous “**passion**” because “*the Spirit of the Lord is upon us... and has anointed us, sent us to announce... to proclaim... to preach!*”⁴.

The “**past**” is the place of the “*Deo gratias*”! The “**present**” is the place of the “*Here I am. Send me!*”! **From gratitude comes passion!**

The Lord continues to entrust today to us, orionine, his church, his poor! The celebration of 100 years can not leave “*quiet*” our orionine missionary heart. Jesus calls us today to “**come out**” to the new “**lands**” of mission that we find in the new poverty of our historical time, in the today of our being LMSC: “*He sent us to announce good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, and sight to the blind!*”

The celebration of our Centenary will be an offer pleasing to the Lord and to the Church, if we manage, especially this year, to renew our “**passion**”, to approach “*the poor*” with the “*balm of charity*”, to make us close to the various “*imprisonments*” generated by exclusion, indifference, exclusionary and sectarian systems, injustice and new solitudes and orphanhood were so many brothers and sisters of all cultures, ages and conditions are. We will really celebrate the Centenary if we try to touch again the “*flesh of Christ*” in the “*blind*” of today: those who do not see the sense of life, who do not see the light of faith, of peace, of love, of human dignity, of freedom... to those ones Jesus “**sends**” us today again, with that “**passion**” that characterizes the heart of Don Orione.

This will be the most beautiful way and the more just to “**celebrate**” our Centenary. Don Orione, once again, shows us the “*way*”, his “*own way*”: “*love Christ in all; serve Christ in the poor; renew Christ in ourselves and restore everything in Christ; save always, save everyone, save at the cost of any sacrifice, **with redeeming passion and redeeming holocaust** ... Let us bring with us and within us the divine treasure of that charity which is God. ... We don't have any more the time that has passed; we are not sure to have the time that is to come; therefore, we only have this point in the present, and no more ... we should not have time to “turn the head to gaze the plow”; so much our mission of charity urges us,*

³ Pope Francis, idem.

⁴ Cfr. Lc 4, 18ss.

*so much the love of the neighbor burns us; so much the divine blazing fire of Christ consumes us. We are the inebriated of charity and the crazy people of the cross of Christ crucified... To have a big heart and the divine madness of souls*⁵.

Dear sisters, this one is our **“identity”**, the sense of our life and the reason of our presence in the Church and in the world. We will not have celebrated in *“truth”* our Centenary, if this year our *“identity”*, our being what our name indicates: **“Little Missionary Sisters of Charity”**, doesn’t light again, doesn’t revives generously, with hope and courage, with joy and passion.

TO “WAKE UP” THE WORLD...

The strong appeal of Pope Francis is for all of us a real program: **“come out, to wake up the world!”**.

We can’t remain in the theory of the phrase or in the *“slogan”* to be placed in the notice board or in the *“circular letters”*. It should be for us, daughters of Don Orione, a challenge and an invitation to review our whole life, our *“style of life”*, our style of relationships among ourselves and with the laity; with “all” the laity, our apostolic style and the evangelizing significance of our works, of our structures, of all our actions. To evaluate everything in the light of the **“prophecy”**, not of human efficiency, of spirit of *“conservation”* or fear of the new.

The Pope expects of the consecrated life this **“prophetic awakening”!**

*“I am counting on you **“to wake up the world”**, since the distinctive sign of consecrated life is prophecy... Prophets receive from God the ability to scrutinize the times in which they live and to interpret events: they are like sentinels who keep watch in the right and sense the coming of the dawn... I trust that, rather than living in some utopia, you will find ways to create “alternate spaces”, where the Gospel approach of self-giving, fraternity, embracing differences and love of one another can thrive... increasingly be the leaven for a society inspired by the Gospel, a “city on a hill”, which testifies to the truth and the power of Jesus’ words*⁶.

This *“year of grace of the Lord”*, which Jesus proclaimed at the beginning of his *“messianic”* time is, for us, **“the year of prophecy”**, **“the year of the prophetic awakening”** of our charism and our orionine female identity, **“the year of coming out”**, **“the year of being uncomfortable”**, **“the year of the dynamism and creativity”**: *“it is needed an enlightened spirit of enterprise, otherwise certain works are not made. Yours become a stasis, is no longer life of apostolate, but a slow death or fossilization. Come on, then! It is not possible to do everything in one day, but it is no necessary to die neither at home nor in the sacristy: out of the sacristy!”*⁷.

So, let us not finish our Jubilee Year without a **“prophetic sign”** concrete, visible and bright, in every Province, in every community, in each one of us, who, as an **“alarm clock of charity”**, awake from sleep and indifference the environment in which we live and move.

“UNDER THE MANTLE OF MARY ...”

*“The Congregation is particularly consecrated to the Virgin Mary, Immaculate and merciful Mother of God; it is under the wings of the Divine Providence and under the mantle of Mary as a child”*⁸.

⁵ Lo spirito di Don Orione, Vol 1, La nostra spiritualità.

⁶ Pope Francis, idem

⁷ Scritti 32,245, da Tortona, 12 gennaio 1930.

⁸ Scritti 18,148; manuscript of the First Constitutions of the LMSC, Buenos Aires, 12 September 1935.

We can't live this Centenary year, so beautiful and meaningful for all of us, without placing ourselves again in the hands, in the heart and under the mantle of Mary, our Heavenly Foundress.

Mary is for us mother and model in everything. In her we find the synthesis of the history of all times. In tutto Maria ci è madre e modello. In Lei troviamo la sintesi della storia di tutti i tempi, In Maria it is summed up the past, the present and the future of the history of Salvation.

Mary, in the song of the *Magnificat* (Lk 1,46-55), teaches us:

- to “**look at the past**” with “*grateful memory*”: “*He has come to the help of Israel his servant, mindful of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors ...!*”;
- to “**live the present**” with astonishment and “*passion*”: “*my soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit exults in God my Saviour... the Almighty has done great things for me!*”;
- to “**embrace the future**”, because Mary is a woman of “*hope*”: “*...from this day forward all generations will call me blessed... his mercy reaches from age to age for those who fear him ...!*”.

From the hand of Mary, we can retrace every day of this Jubilee Year, safe to walk on the right path that will lead us to Jesus and to each brother and sister.

Mary will conduce us on the path that leads to any “*periphery*” to offer the word and the appropriate gesture of true “*missionaries of charity, which means, Missionaries of God, because God is charity; which means missionaries of Jesus Christ, because Jesus Christ is god and is charity; which means missionaries, that is, evangelizers and servants of the poor*”⁹.

From the hand of Mary, we will also sing, during this Centenary, the *Magnificat* with our lives and with our actions!

Mary, whose name all of us happily carry, not only as a gesture of devotion, but as a “*reproduction*” of his love and full dedication to Christ and the brothers, is and always will be the star of evangelization that will guide us to a safe harbor.

Without Mary, our Congregation would lose its identity. Don Orione describes this with his infinite love and devotion: “*we can say that is all the work of Mary: it rose for the work of Mary; grew for the work of Mary; remains for the work of Mary. We owe everything to Mary, reason therefore to have a great devotion to Her, to show her our gratitude... God wanted to come to us through Mary, and we can't go to God unless through Mary. Who will lead us safely to the mountain of the Lord?... Who will lead us to the longed harbor? Who will defend us from the snares of the enemy?... Mary is our defense, because she is our sweet mother, she is our advocate and our hope. Mary is the one in which we must put all our trust. May Our Lady be always in our minds and in our hearts, in our studies, in the work, in everything we do! Mary, always Mary!*”¹⁰.

Our Centenary would be incomplete without Mary!

Let us sing together, in the various languages in which it was translated, that ancient and beautiful song, so dear to Don Orione, which identified the loves and the missionary zeal of the early days, the song that with love and filial abandonment sang our first “*missionaries*”, and that we too have repeated in our first years of formation: “*solchiamo un mare infido, d'un mondo traditore, al sospirato lido, chi mai ci condurrà: Maria, pietosa e bella, del mare lucente stella! Maria, speranza nostra, guida di noi sarà!*”.

⁹ Constitutions LMSC, Art. 1.

¹⁰ Scritti 71,193-194, 19th. April 1915.

Mariy, our hope, safe in her hands and under her guidance, will lead the small “boat” of the Congregation over the seas of faith, hope and charity, thast we may shine with the “**prophecy**” of Charity in the Church: true and joyful **Little Missionary Sisters of Charity!**

I embrace each one of you with affection and joy in the Lord. We join in common prayer of thanksgiving and praise: happy “*birthday*” to all of you! This time we could also sing the best wishes in polish: “*Sto lat! Sto lat!*” (one hundred years, one hundred years!) May the Lord bless us all, all!!

Deo gratias, et Mariae!!

Hail Mary, always!

Your sister


Sr. M. Mabel Spagnuolo
General Superior

Buenos Aires (Argentina), 1st. February 2015.
Opening of the Centenary of Foundation of the LMSC

Note: this circular serves as lighting for the reflections and commitments of Lent time, which is also close.

It is important to situate our reflection of Lent both in tune with the proposal of the final Document of the general Assembly, and the program of the provincial or regional Council for this year, that concerns the “*purgative way*”.

The meditation on the challenge of our 100 years, together with the proposals of the Year of the Consecrated Life, are, without doubt, a providential opportunity to “*decide*” personally and with the community, the beginning of a true path of holiness, in docility to the Holy Spirit, that wants to help us to “*unlearn*” the old man, to “*learn*” the new attitudes and style according to the heart of Christ and of Don Orione today. I wish you all a fruitful journey of transformation that will lead us to the full joy of the Risen Christ! May we, LMSC, rise with Him!