

See through the eyes of Jesus

First Circular Letter
from the Superior General and his Council
2004-2010

May 15, 2005
Solemnity of Pentecost

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Introduction

Dear brothers in *our beautiful vocation*:

Please receive a heartfelt greeting on occasion of the celebration of our main feast. We are asking the Holy Spirit for Pentecost to grant us, His Missionaries, the gift of a new vision capable to see the world, the Church and our own history *through the eyes of Jesus*.

You may recall that since the beginning of this period of service we received the invitation to *discipleship* (XIV GC p. 6), making of the contents of the XIV General Chapter a life program.

The disciple, according to the New Testament, is someone who knows he has been called by Jesus; His person and mission fascinate and bewilder him. The disciple has an attentive ear and keeps his whole being fixed on Him, the one he follows. Little by little his life is transformed until he gets to be a witness to what he has seen, heard and touched (*1 Jn 1,1-4*).

This is the way our Father Founder came to be when he received the calling to the Spirituality of the Cross. It is profitable for us to contemplate his more than thirty years of discipleship, not only because Conchita, our

Spiritual Mother, called him “the mould”¹, neither because in his condition as founder he knew how to give us the initial understanding of the charism of the Congregation God was revealing him, but most of all because we find in him a model of discipleship such as the XIV General Chapter is asking from us:

- ⇒ To turn back, with our eyes and heart, to the sources of our spirituality.
- ⇒ To see the world and the Church with Jesus’ eyes and heart.
- ⇒ To move from discourse into life, from dullness to conversion, «so we can be a living memorial of the way of living and acting of Jesus Christ Priest and Victim, contemplative and compassionate, both for the Church and for the world» (XIV GC p. 4).

It will suffice to read our Father Founder’s *Diary* as well as the *Final Document of the XIV General Chapter* and its application within the provincial documents, to understand there is one same calling uniting our Father Founder with us: an invitation for interior life, to shape our life and mission according to that of Christ the Priest and Victim, and the demand for radicalism as we live our consecration. In a few words: a call to be holy and make holy the world around us by giving it the richness of our charism.

We have written this Circular Letter in a prayerful atmosphere. As we were writing it we had in mind each Missionary of the Holy Spirit. We looked for a simple

¹ ROUGIER FJ: *Diario y Reminiscencias* 1,135. Mexico, Private Edition, 2002.

and familiar style. With a rhythm in it that will make it easy for you to pause, meditate and confront your life against all the things written here and what God is asking from you. We truly wish this first Circular Letter with its title: *See through the eyes of Jesus*, will be for all an instrument for interiorizing and renewal.

Here you have an overview of the whole Circular Letter:

Seeing *ourselves* through the eyes of Jesus, with a contemplative and loving sight, dignifies us and engages us for the mission. It discloses our personal richness and our limits, and opens us to trust because, if we do our share, *the rest He will do* (Chapter 1).

Seeing with Jesus' eyes *the world and the Church*, with their richness and potentials, and discovering their limitations and lacks, awakens in us the audacity and creativity to deliver them, with joy and gratuitously, the charismatic wealth entrusted to us (Chapter 2).


Embracing the light we gain as we contemplate *Jesus Christ Priest and Victim, contemplative and compassionate*, coming to us from the life and doctrine of Conchita and Father Felix, and receiving in faith the message of our General and Provincial Chapters, engages us to renew our lives and ministry in order to respond, in creative fidelity, to a world in need of the message of the Cross (Chapter 3).

We are aware that both, God and the world, urge us to move from discourse into action as an expression of the prophetic and mystical characteristics of consecrated life. For this reason we need to assume some *attitudes* suggested by our Chapters and get in touch

with some means directed to nourish in us a passion for Christ and a passion for humanity (Chapter 4).

We pray the Holy Spirit to lead us to the plain truth (*Jn* 16,13). And we entreat the Blessed Virgin Mary to obtain for us the grace to keep all this things and meditate them in our heart (*Lk* 2,19.51).

Fraternally yours:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "D. Di Raimondo". Below the signature, there are some faint, smaller handwritten notes that appear to say "Min. Sup. Ital.".


Domenico Di Raimondo

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fernando Torre".

Fernando Torre

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eduardo Sarre". To the right of the signature, the letters "MSpS" are written.

Eduardo Sarre

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gerardo Herrera".

Gerardo Herrera

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Edmundo De los Santos".

Edmundo De los Santos

1. Our personal reality

Let us center our vision on our historical truth, allowing it to shine clearly, and let us thank God, our family and our Congregation for all we have received from them. We need to cultivate and enlighten the memory of our historic development, going through all its stages up to the present time. Without memory our identity weakens, our present becomes unconscious and the future is uncertain.

We carry in our innermost a variety of richness, limitations, yearnings and hopes which constitute us and give us the joy for life, the pain of frustration, the hope for a better life. Our inner load gives birth to an encounter with God that grows continuously in depth and to a following of Jesus that ties us ever closer to Him as we face different issues at personal level, in community, in the Congregation and in the world.

To better understand the meaning of ones own history, we invite you to reflect on these three aspects: the richness, the limitations, and the yearnings and hopes.

1.1. Personal Richness

Our original richness is the gift of life. Another one is baptism, which begets us within the Church, our being in Christ; and which has sealed, with the awakening of our faith, up to this very day the path of our vocation.

THE CALLING

Just as unique as fingertips are, is our personal calling. The Lord, in his inscrutable designs, has touched us in our childhood, youth, or during the first years of our mature life. It has been for each and all of us a personal encounter, repeated through the years. It could be that some of us did not want to listen to it, but in time and circumstances this calling became more incisive. The different events in our life —family, friends, studies, society—, seen under the light of our faith, were the means God chose to call us to our Congregation. This calling, constantly renewed, has given us fulfillment, though not without difficulties. And even though we have not always been constant in our response, God has confirmed us in our personal, community, congregational and ecclesial journey.

- ➡ **As I bring to mind the memory of my calling, what kind of feelings do I get?**
- ➡ **Comparing it to my first years, what is the novelty of my response today?**

CAPACITIES AND PERSONAL GROWTH

Our capacities are a God given gift; they are inscribed as potentials in our most intimate self. They are the joyful expression of our personal being. Through the years we have been molding or developing some capacities, we have refined others, and yet some others we have discovered in our adulthood.

Many of our brothers, especially those older, have contributed to brighten our capacities bearing fruit for our Congregation, the Church and society. What we have acquired through basic or ongoing formation, or in pastoral ministry have enriched us and enabled us to give more abundantly, filling us with joy and satisfaction. When we thank God for all this and put it to the service of others, is like fulfilling the answer to the calling, though not always joyful, but always making us holy.

- ➡ **As I face my capacities, what are the feelings coming forth?**
- ➡ **Who are the ones who have contributed to the development of my capacities? In what circumstances?**
- ➡ **In which occasions have I used my capacities just for my own good?**

1.2. Personal limitations

FAMILY EXPERIENCE

Our own family is the primordial ground for our person and our vocation. From it we receive the fundamental characteristics of our personality. It was there where our character first took form; then growing and being projected in our Congregation. Many of our good habits and qualities come from our family, but then again, it is from it that we also inherit the limitations and burdens we have been detecting throughout the years. Some of our wounds were generated there, maybe unconsciously, pulling us to seek gratifications and compensations in our life.

When we faced our brothers in our first years of formation, we discovered those differences and limitations. At the beginning this was an unconscious perception making us suffer for our diversity, or because we reacted different from them. Later, having become more conscious, we have been assuming the qualities and limitations we have received from our family. To recognize and accept in peace the limitations coming from our family is a gift which makes us understand our family more fully and give thanks to God for it.

- ➡ **What are my feelings as I face the legacy from my family?**
- ➡ **How do I project what I have received from my family?**

THE FORMATION EXPERIENCE

The passage from our natural family to our spiritual one is both a joyful and painful transition. It is joyful for all that is being learned and being received, also because the family has expanded and there is always something new. It is painful because we have to break away from our affections, because there is a need to face something new, which implies leaving behind old habits more or less rooted in us. With all the goodness that the formation process entails, it may have left traumatic experiences in us, or branded us with the theological or pastoral fad of the moment. Our formation may be different from that of our brothers in community. This could be a limitation, but also a plurality enriching our group if we profit from it while discerning within the community.

- ➡ **How do I profit from the differences there are in formation among my brothers in community?**
- ➡ **In spite of the differences, do I try to build a community that is united? Through what means?**

THE PASTORAL EXPERIENCE

Pastoral life is enriching and gives self fulfillment by serving others, by witnessing to the Gospel, by showing to humanity the face of a God who is friend and brother, father and mother. We all can make an account of the different pastoral fields in which we have served, of the communities in which we have been, of the persons God has placed on our way.

Most surely we have experienced a little bit of everything: moments of overwhelming joy when we

have helped someone; such an experience has given us strength to be better prepared and tune our service. But we may have also lived through moments of cross which have made us grow, or made us taste the bitterness of life itself. Probably no one can escape completely to the vices of the apostle, like setting ourselves at the center of action instead of putting God and the brother; the loss of pastoral zeal leading us into sloth; jealousy and envy; dependency on alcohol, television or internet; becoming attached to a person, or enclosing ourselves in a group. There may be some other deficiencies we have allowed to nest in our daily pastoral practice: mistreatment, routine, boredom, narrowing our perspectives or keeping ourselves disengaged in apathy from social movements. The awareness of our present situation and the grace God offers us can make us go back to our first love.

- ➡ **What are the feelings I get as I take a look at my pastoral history?**
- ➡ **When and how have I fallen into the vices of the apostle?**

1.3. Yearnings and hopes

Even though our person is very rich in itself, it always lives from its yearnings and hopes, helping it to move forward and constantly grow; motivating it in its daily efforts to struggle and endure suffering and, in a wide range of fields, giving sense to the future.

IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

The starting point in all religious life is faith. The gift of baptism becomes conscious and personal with the calling, which is unique and without repetition. For us it has been concretized in the call to be Missionaries of the Holy Spirit. God has chosen each one of us for a personal friendship with the hue of “el querido color” —“the dear color”—. In this we also have yearnings—forged since the Novitiate or the Apostolic School—very personal in themselves, but with a common denominator that unites us all. Those yearnings will always be with us, they will be our letter of presentation in our definitive encounter with God.

- ➡ **What kind of feelings awake within me as I know I am loved by God?**
- ➡ **What kind of yearnings excites in me God’ spousal covenant?**

IN OUR WORK PROJECTS AND AFFECTIVITY

We all carry within ourselves, among other motivations, two which are very strong: to make true our ideas and projects, and the engine of affectivity. On both fields we have yearnings and hopes moving our existence and motivating us to be updated and ready for work.

The fact of making real our personal work projects keeps us alive and motivates us to commitment and to the donation of ourselves. It makes us reach out and project ourselves in a certain task or activity. Something similar happens to affectivity: friendships and affections fill us with peace and fulfillment, help us discover God’s love in our concrete brother and sister and make us enjoy

love's creativity. Creativity, both in work projects and friendship, is the expression of God's creative love in which we are collaborators.

- ➡ **What helps me to point out that community life is an expression of my personal love for others?**
- ➡ **When have I contributed with my inventiveness to foster happiness in my brothers?**
- ➡ **How do I express God's creative love in my projects and relationships?**

IN THE MISSION OF OUR CONGREGATION

Since we begun our vocational adventure we have had yearnings and hopes related to the mission of our Congregation, which in time have combined with our personal mission. Simultaneously, just like a symbiosis, the Institute's mission is that of each of its members.

Each one of us collaborates in the mission of our Congregation giving it a certain hue and color with our specific works and personal expressions. The yearnings of our youth are now a reality, which in turn become hope seeking to be ever more faithful to our mission. This yearning gives us a sense of fulfillment, but we have to polish it more and more. Each General or Provincial Chapter provides us with new guidelines and new concretions of the mission, stirring us in new searches that flow from our inner yearning for fidelity.

- ➡ **What are the feelings surging from within me as I recall the fields where I have exercised the mission of our Congregation?**

- ➡ **What kind of yearnings were awakened as I read both documents from the General and the Provincial Chapters?**

1.4. A gift to be freely given

Everything we have received and what we are, is a gift to be freely given, to be offered; or, as our Spiritual Mother would say, to be sacrificed together with the purest Victim, on the altar of daily life, of our personal history, of the community and of the Congregation.

We are those who have grown through the different stages of formation, or through work and pastoral service; those who have been tested by giving themselves everyday, surrendering their time and energies; those who have forgone their youth in pastoral work, formation or leadership. Yes, we are those who continue listening to the calling to be Missionaries of the Holy Spirit, to live in a radical way our consecration to God, surrendering ourselves to the service of others, to live and give what we have received.

- ➡ **What are the feelings awakening in me as I realize I have spent my life on behalf of others?**
- ➡ **In which way do I continue to grow in the offering of my person?**
- ➡ **Three concrete experiences in which I discover that my religious and/or priestly life has been a gift for others?**

2. Turning our eyes to the world where we live

To see the world through the eyes of Jesus is an imperative. In the world live, struggle and die the concrete men and women to whom Jesus was sent so they «will have life and life in abundance» (Jn 10,10).

It is on the world where Conchita, our Spiritual Mother, had her sight fixed when, moved by the Spirit, she branded herself with the monogram and exclaimed: «*Jesús, Salvador de los hombres, ¡sálvalos!*» (*Jesus, Savior of all People, save them!*). We now invite you to see through the eyes of Jesus and with his own heart, the lights and shadows of our world and our Church.

Many have turned their sight to the world and the Church in order to understand them better. Let us think of those who wrote the splendid Dogmatic Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, as well as of those who attended the different continental synods. Let us remember Pope John Paul II, recently deceased, and the group of men and women who elaborated the *Work Document* for the International Congress for Consecrated Life, held in Rome in 2004.

The XIV General Chapter has echoed this ecclesial journey and has invited us to put our feet and our heart on this world; to be open, without restraints, to its demands of justice and peace; and to listen, moved to compassion, to its need for God and salvation (p. 6, and numbers 4, 5, 8, 28, 31...).

- ➡ **Am I sensitive to the world's reality, or do the urgencies and tasks of daily life confine me to a small circle, and shorten my vision? On what things can I notice it?**
- ➡ **Are my sight and heart ecclesial, or do I limit myself by the interest of what is nearest, favoring selfish pettiness? On what is it manifested?**

2.1. Richness and limitations of our world

Given the length of this Circular Letter, and the great number of documents dealing in detail with the reality of our world, we invite you to set your sight on some elements that can shed light to our understanding of the world and the Church. It is at the face of these realities that the actuality of our charism is at stake.

We live in a globalized and plural world, with great material, cultural and spiritual wealth, as well as with great technological advances which, thanks to the means of communication, can get to a greater number of persons.

The peoples' reflection and the international praxis have been creating a space in which the value of the human person, with its rights and responsibilities, and the deserved respect to its liberty, have been gaining

ground and visibility. This development has made possible the national and international expressions of solidarity, such as *the march for peace* organized against the invasion of Iraq.

We are witnessing the awakening of a spiritual feeling in many countries of the world and in many sectors of humanity; persons and groups are searching for “something else”, or better said, “Someone else” who will satisfy their thirst for infinity.

In spite of all, just as it was recently said by Pope John Paul II, of blessed memory: «A scenario emerged which, despite certain positive elements, is marred by acts of violence and bloodshed which causes continued concern» (MND 6).

As a matter of fact, globalization is taking us into a world of contrasts, coexisting in its richness and values together with limitations and deficiencies. This does reverberate in different fields: economy, politics, ecology, migration movements, culture, education, the world of work, mass media, etc.

International solidarity and the great majorities search for justice and peace do not seem to reach the groups holding power and acting according to their selfish interests. This creates a feeling of impotence and despair, awakening violent reactions by which the cross of the world becomes more burdensome.

Besides, as a result of the above, in many men and women prevails such a way of life that limits their view to their immediate present. When attention is centered on superficial things and reduced to activities and matters of the ordinary life, it stifles the interest for

deeper questions about the sense of life and transcendence. The incapacity for stable commitments and the devaluation of love grow. The affirmation of personal freedom generates an attitude of a practical lack of interest for the rights and needs of others.

➡ **What other richness and limitations do I find in the world surrounding me?**

➡ **In which way do these richness and limitations affect my lifestyle and pastoral work?**

2.2. Richness and limitations of the Church

The Church, called to be *light of the peoples* (LG 1), as it was joyfully confessed by those who participated in the Second Vatican Council, has continued its pilgrimage and search. In its life and pastoral praxis, lights and shadows also mix.

The change brought by the Council, the celebration of the mysteries in each native language, and the reading of the Word of God have brought an inner renewal and a variety of formation projects reaching to many, generating a more committed and adult life of faith.

The situation of injustice and war in the world has brought some sectors of the Church to proclaim in word and action the Gospel of the Kingdom, with such incidence, that leads to the transformation of structures. The local churches, with more or less strength, depending on each case, share their experiences and seek new ways for evangelization.

Little by little, we have come to a growing awareness regarding the roll of the laity and its communion and complementarity with religious life and the ministerial priesthood. Thus, hunger for God grows among lay people; consecrated life opens again to share with them life and spirituality; and new opportunities flourish for the laity to collaborate at parochial and diocesan levels.

Together with the call to the new evangelization, to contemplate the face of Christ, to embody a life of holiness in which to live the Gospel in an incultured way, and to embrace the «new creativity in charity» (NMI 50), the Church has arrived to the third millennium with a diminished credibility and great lacks, making her less significant to many men and women. The theological faith has weakened within many, causing a crash on prayer, liturgy, evangelical testimony and apostolic commitment.

The language used by the Church to evangelize is in many environments little significant and not well adapted to our world. The poor are a prophetic question to which the Church, especially the hierarchy, has not given a clear and significant answer. On the horizon can be seen the first lights of a *new* evangelization, a *new* spirituality, and *new* Church paradigms, and yet, we don't have enough clarity and we do not walk with decision towards the *newness of life*.

«Many are not able to integrate the evangelical message together with their daily experience» (EE 7).
«The failure of modern culture in its pretension to offer

² CELAM, *Plan Global*, 107

meaning to human existence, and the pastoral difficulty to keep the Christian identity of our peoples, have given place to a growing search for religious alternatives and have favored the apparition of an authentic super-market for religions»².

Priestly life and, also in many cases, consecrated life, are sunk in mediocrity. Consequently, there is a need for conversion to Jesus Christ as well as a renewal of the passion for Christ and the passion for humanity among these groups.

2.3. Our charism God's gift to the world

If we allow ourselves to be touched by this reality of the world and the Church, we cannot stop from asking: what is the roll of our Congregation in this historical moment? Which are the opportunities the modern world is offering us to serve it with the heart of the Good Samaritan?

The XIV General Chapter has made an urgent appeal to all of us «so we all will turn our eyes and heart to our Sources and to Conchita and Father Felix, our Parents in the Spirit, [...] and listen to their yearnings that salvation of Jesus the Priest will come to the whole world» (p. 6). It is an appeal often repeated along the Chapter's document (1, 8, 30, 35, 38, 40...), because we are certain that our charismatic identity, lived in creative fidelity, has real answers to the problems of our time (cf Vision 2).

The same Chapter has invited us to experience a conversion to the charismatic and apostolic identity (cf

Visions 1 and 4), because it is convinced that the testimony of life, the experience of God's mercy and the gift of unconditional love, is what will bring our world a trust worthy message and a significant fraternity.

The Holy Spirit, and those taking part in the General Chapter, have invited us to plan our mission having, as the starting point, a perspective that will integrate the formation of the Priestly People, with define processes of holiness (for persons and communities) that entail a serious commitment of solidarity with the world, especially with the poorest. Having this scenario in mind we can better understand the place and opportunity given by our Sources and Constitutions to the priority among the people we are called to serve, to our own apostolic Works and to our characteristic means (Vision 3).

An undeniable fact is that today we are "a small remnant" at the service of the world and the Church. Yes, we are a "small remnant" with a charismatic treasure that is indeed a response to today's deeper needs. Now, more than ever before, it is an imperative that we hold on to a bold faith and to a persevering action, leading us to conversion, congregational unity, charismatic definition and meaningful projects.

- ➡ **Having this charismatic richness and facing today's world, what feelings stir up within me?**
- ➡ **What would I think will be Conchita's and Felix's reaction?**
- ➡ **What do I need for looking at today's world – with its lights and shadows – as an opportunity to deliver the gift I have received?**

3. The lights God gives us: a gift and a task

3.1. Jesus the Priest and Victim

The heavenly Father sees us with mercy and this same sight goes through the heart of Jesus of Nazareth. When he becomes flesh, the Word of life assumes human misery; that is why he needs to learn to be in the flesh, and, as the *letter to the Hebrews* says, he learned obedience from what he suffered. He becomes fully a man as he experiences in all its depth the greatness and limitation of being human. Likewise he perfects himself as a priest capable to offer himself for the salvation of all human beings (cf *Hb* 2,10-18; 5,7-9).

Jesus Priest and Victim lived the same process each one of us lives as we grow and develop, because his incarnation is real, introducing him in the same growth dynamism each human being experiences. As he is the Son and becomes man, he enters into our dynamic for learning, for overcoming limits, for constant openness to God's action and for the progressive process in discovering God's will.

Luke's gospel presents us a Jesus filled with the Holy Spirit, constantly moved by Him. He is begotten in Mary by the Holy Spirit (*Lk 1,35*). Jesus grows in wisdom, age and grace before God and men (*Lk 2,40.52*). In his baptism, the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus (*Lk 3,21-22*), then the same Spirit takes him to the desert (*Lk 4,1*). In Nazareth's synagogue the Holy Spirit anoints Jesus to fulfill his mission (*Lk 4,16-21*). Being docile to the movements of the Holy Spirit, Jesus the Priest offers himself as a blameless victim giving us his life (*Hb 9,14*).

Jesus looks at us with the certainty that we are capable to profit from our personal strength to fulfill God's will every day. But also, from his own learning through suffering, he invites us to seek, without interruption and by all means, the signs of God's will. The Father challenges us to move, to change, to learn to be sons together with the Son; that is to say, to learn to obey.

- ➡ **In which way have I felt accompanied by Jesus the Priest in accepting my limitations, capabilities and yearnings?**
- ➡ **How is Jesus the Priest inviting me to keep myself in constant conversion to attain the stature of the full man in Him?**

3.2. Our Parents in the Spirit

Conchita and Felix of Jesus contemplated Jesus the Priest and Victim, yearning to share His feelings. It was from Him they learned there is no stop to walking, growing and following the movements of the Spirit.

One of the elements calling our attention when reading our Spiritual Mother's *Cuenta de Conciencia* —*Spiritual Journal*—, is her constant analysis of her response to God, and finding that she still has too much to learn, that her response to God could be more generous. Even though she has special lights from God, she always allows herself to be guided by her spiritual directors, who open for her new roads and show her new demands. She constantly has the desire to listen better and to find new ways to answer to the love of the Lord. On October 1936, she takes the spiritual exercises in Morelia with Bishop Luis Ma. Martínez. He presents her with a life program which she accepts. These are Bishop Martínez words written by our Spiritual Mother in her *Spiritual Journal*:

I have copied my "Spiritual Program", my Jesus, and meditated it; with your help I hope to put it into practice with all the fidelity and constancy I am capable of.

I will read it frequently, and I will attach my spiritual life to it, practicing its points in order to please Jesus and fulfill God's designs for my soul.

The three Divine Persons... The theological virtues... taking away obstacles... *and affirming dispositions.*

All with God's help, and yours, my father, in whose arms is my soul and its sanctification.

It is urgent [to make good use of] the time I have left to fulfill God's work in my spirit (CC 66,160: Nov 1, 1936).

Some days later she writes she thanked some people for telling her some of her defects to be corrected, and she says it will do her great good to have someone near

her to frequently point out her defects. In this way she expresses her constant eagerness to answer to the Lord.

In the same way, our Father Founder is never satisfied with all he has done to fulfill God's will. He seeks a way to higher perfection and the Holy Spirit grants him an encounter with Conchita. Felix of Jesus wants to always be more obedient and transparent in order to do at all time what pleases the Father. The negative response to begin immediately the cherished project of our foundation, and the provisional permits to take care of the Congregation were, for Felix of Jesus, constant invitations to be on the road, not to dwell on what he had accomplished. He sees the needs of the Church in Mexico and he hastens to respond to them with new religious institutes. He constantly thinks on what is convenient for our Congregation and takes adequate steps to give an answer to the needs he discovers. Besides all this, he never stops seeking the best way to thank the Lord, to grow in fidelity to his vocation, to seek how to allow himself to be formed by the Holy Spirit.

Our Father Founder allows himself to be enlightened by our Spiritual Mother, to point him out those things on which he needs to continue working. This we can read in a letter written by her in 1923 inviting him to be a man of prayer, with his feet on the ground and his soul in heaven, because he has to be a mirror of perfection on which the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit, to whom he has to communicate his devotion, his knowledge and love; can see themselves³.

³ Cf CABRERA DE ARMIDA C: *Cartas al Padre Félix de Jesús Rougier y a Misioneros del Espíritu Santo*. Mexico, Ediciones Cimiento, 1989, letter 76, p. 133.

When in 1934 he is writing his book *Mary*, wishing to offer «a solid book that is at the capacity of moderate cultivated people», he consults, as he says, more than eighty authors, so he could lay a good foundation for his writing⁴. And in the task he has taken as spiritual director of many religious women, he invites them to write to him promising he will answer as soon as he is able to do so. And if he is delayed in sending some lines to anyone of them, he promises to change. On January 2, 1938, a few days before his death, even though he may be “resting” in the hospital, he renews his commitment to pray for those he loves⁵.

Our Parents in the Spirit never quitted listening to the Lord; they did not stop a single moment seeking how to respond to his invitations in a better way, and they did not cease preparing themselves for the service of others. To look at them impels us to engage ourselves with committed attitudes for our own growth, especially in those areas in which we find more difficulty for conversion, or those in which we are immovable.

- ➡ **When I see our Parents in the Spirit in their human dimension, what kind of feelings do I get?**
- ➡ **Their example, what does it stir within me?**
- ➡ **In what personal situation was I enlightened by our Spiritual Parents’ example, and helped me to act or make mine new attitudes?**

⁴ ROUGIER FJ: *Cartas a Religiosas de la Cruz*. Mexico, Ediciones Cimiento, 1989, 277.

⁵ Cf ROUGIER FJ: *Cartas a Religiosas de la Cruz*. Mexico, Ediciones Cimiento, 1989, 163.

3.3. Our documents

We now have new lights in the documents issued by our Chapters. Their message impel us to continue learning. In the Final Document from the XIV General Chapter and in those of the Provinces, we have set what God is asking from us, and what we want to achieve.

They are a vision of the way we want to be as Missionaries of the Holy Spirit when we turn a hundred years old in the life of the Church. These documents are a goal to be achieved; a dynamism putting us on the move, not allowing us to remain stagnant, neither to be conformists nor to feel lacking in hope. All this because they are contemplations of the future, springing from the Lord's will and from what our heart is yearning for in the midst of our well known frailty and resistance.

The Holy Spirit, through the General Chapter, invites us to assume attitudes, to state criteria, and keep ourselves in a strong dynamism of conversion. Each Province has concretized this invitation by presenting *projects* which point to clear steps for living our being as Missionaries of the Holy Spirit; through *actions* making us enthusiastic to continue our formation and not forsake our development; with *means* helping us to detect what we still have to walk; with *plans* helping us to make this journey supporting each other in our community life.

If we read these documents with a vision of faith, allowing them to stir in us the deep desires for life, love, holiness and unselfish service, this could make our mind, our heart, and our body to get in motion and

walk with firm and well defined steps, just as the Lord is asking from us. Like he said to the paralytic, Jesus is saying to us: «get up... and walk» (*Jn 5,8*).

- ➡ **What statements from the XIV General Chapter have been impelling me to renew my life and the way I serve others?**
- ➡ **How am I applying to my life the project on consecrated life written in the document of the Third Chapter or of the Second Assembly of my Province?**

4. Attitudes and means for the journey

We have contemplated our personal and congregational history, as well as the reality of the world around us, the wealth we have in our Sources and the example of our Founders. Now our eyes look to the future, a future to which God is calling us and which we have to visualize; a future attractive and stimulating, yet one that demands from us work and passion in order to build it.

The XIV General Chapter was the contemplative sight of an immediate future—the government period 2004-2010—and one remote—the year 2014—. Such sight took shape in four “*Visions of the Future*”. «A “vision of the future” expresses what we believe God is asking from us, is a description of the goal to which we must direct our steps during this period of government» (XIV GC 23).

Also the Chapter was an invitation to action, to pass from discourse into life. That is why after each *Vision* the *Roads* are concretized, which «are orientations for action, routes leading us to the goal» (XIV GC 23).

The Congregation’s future is God’s grace, but it is also our creation. It pertains to each one of us in particular, and to all as a whole, to visualize it and fulfill it. From

what we dream today, but must of all, from what we do or forgo to do, will depend what the Congregation will be in the years 2010, 2014...

- ➡ Those who see our community, what image of our Congregation do they get?
- ➡ What is my dream of my Congregation in the year 2014?
- ➡ What am I going to do to get the Congregation closer to that ideal?

4.1. Attitudes

CONVERSION

To dream God's dreams and fulfill His project for our Congregation, a change of mind and heart is indispensable, one which will not be limited to a specific moment, but an attitude taking us to live in a state of conversion:

- ◆ Conversion to God who has willed our Congregation;
- ◆ Conversion to God's project, collaborating in the building of the Kingdom;
- ◆ Conversion to a lifestyle coherent with the radical following of Jesus Christ;
- ◆ Conversion to realize our mission in such a way that it will manifest, with meridian clarity, «passion for Christ and passion for humanity».

- ➡ **What concrete elements in my way of life make manifest that the supreme norm of my life is the radical following of Jesus Christ? Which are they?**
- ➡ **In which concrete things is God inviting me to conversion?**

LOVE AND CONGREGATIONAL BOND

Another attitude leading us to fulfill God's project for us is our love for the Congregation, «our beloved Congregation», as our Father Founder liked to say. A love that is patient, a love that is firm, a love that is constructive. This is the way our bond with our Congregation will be strengthened, because our Institute is not an abstract being, but actually three Provinces seeking to embody our charism in a variety of circumstances; we are fifty eight communities and one team looking to fulfill our mission in eight countries; we are almost four hundred brothers sharing our life and mission.

- ➡ **How do I show my love and bond with our Congregation?**

CREATIVE FIDELITY

The so called «creative fidelity» (VC 37), to which we were invited by the recently deceased John Paul II, is an essential condition for our consecrated life to be meaningful to today's world, and for our mission to answer to the needs of the men and women we serve.

In order to excite in us this creative fidelity, the Holy Spirit impels us, both, toward the concrete realities of the world in which we live —for «it is often through historical events that we discern God's hidden call to

work according to his plan by active and effective involvement in the events of our time» (VC 73)—, and toward our Sources, in which we find «the doctrine of the cross and our peculiar spirit and mission, as they were communicated by our Parents in our vocation» (CD 112).

➡ **For the time being during this year 2005, in what way have I approached the world and read the historical events?**

➡ **Have I approached our Sources?**

CRISIS AND GROWTH

We live in times of crisis. Our vocation is threatened by different circumstances. The future of our Congregation is uncertain, and even that of consecrated life in itself. We are preoccupied by the congregational aging (the average age is 49.94 years), and the reduced number of vocations. In the recent past some of our brothers decided to leave the Congregation.

Crisis can become excellent opportunities. Crisis—and not those moments of tranquility— can help us to grow. This is because they make us touch with crudity our reality, because they demand from us to exercise our capacities to their fullness, and develop our creativity. Indeed, crises strip us from what is superfluous and center us on what is essential; they make us practice patience and hope; they bring us closer to God and bring us to trust in Him.

- ➡ **Has the actual crisis made me more defensive, aggressive, bitter; or, on the contrary, has it made me more creative, humble; has it opened me to hope?**
- ➡ **What kind of learning and growth have I experienced during these times of crisis?**

4.2. Means

It is not enough to wish for conversion, to strengthen our tie to our Congregation or to pretend to profit from crisis as moments for growing; it is necessary to have the means to do it. This is the only way we will pass from discourse into life, from wishing into action.

The Church has always confessed her faith on the Holy Spirit's action: «without your help there is nothing in man, nothing that is good»; «heal what is ill»; «comfort without ceasing our frailty»; «with you as our guide, let us avoid all evil»⁶. The Holy Spirit works, ordinarily, through mediations. Let make a good profit from the means our Congregation is offering us during this six years of government.

ONGOING FORMATION

First we have *ongoing formation* (cf XIV GC 105-108). The team responsible for this has organized several intensive periods. They are a true privilege offered by

⁶ For the first two sentences cf. *Veni Sancte Spiritus*; for the other two cf. *Veni Creator*.

the Congregation for our wholesome renewal. There will be some other instances for ongoing formation organized by each Province.

Nevertheless, these things will be useless, if there is no desire on our part for growth, a readiness to walk toward the direction God is calling us. That is why the General Chapter asked from us: «Each religious must elaborate and fulfill a personal project for ongoing formation, which will include the areas of health, and intellectual, pastoral and spiritual formation» (XIV GC 107).

- ➡ **What is my attitude towards the intensive periods of ongoing formation?**
- ➡ **If I already have a personal project for ongoing formation, how am I going to enrich it? If I still don't have it, when am I going to plan it?**

SPRITUAL EXERCISES

In addition, in 2005 and 2006 there will be offered to all the members of our Congregation the opportunity to have *spiritual exercises* «to review with greater care our life, under the light of our ideal as Missionaries of the Holy Spirit, and obtain deeper cohesion with our Lord, and a solid and constant progress on the holiness of our vocation» (CD 110).

- ➡ **How will I get ready for my participation in these spiritual exercises?**
- ➡ **What fruits I hope to obtain?**

OTHER MEANS

In our congregational life there are other means through which the Holy Spirit works within us, excites conversion, and impels us to a creative fidelity. Some of these means are the regional or project meetings, the assemblies, the gatherings for superiors, economic administrators or vocational directors. We also have the periodical communications, visits by major superiors, the fraternal gatherings on the occasion of special events, informal provincial gatherings, etc.

➡ **Do I take part in our Congregation's activities? With what kind of attitude?**

With our sight set on the future, let us allow the Holy Spirit to renew our enthusiasm for «our beautiful vocation», and let us walk in faithful creativity towards the year 2014.

Conclusion

Dear brothers in *our beautiful vocation*:

We have come to the conclusion of this first Circular Letter with the hope its reading would have been an instrument for inner deepening and renewal.

As we contemplate our beloved Congregation *with the eyes of Jesus*, persons are the ones appearing on the foreground. As we said before, the Congregation is not an abstract being; it is you and me; it is today's Missionaries and those coming in the future. We all are called to be a «living memorial of the way of living and acting of Jesus Christ Priest and Victim, contemplative and compassionate, both for the Church and for the world» (XIV GC p. 4). Together we will fulfill the mission of our Congregation.

Our Father Founder understood it to be so. On July 10, 1937 he wrote:

“The rest I will do”. And we are very sure Our Lord will do so, because THIS CONGREGATION IS HIS, truly; He thought of it from all eternity; he made it come true by means of weak instruments. Our Mother, who communicated me the will of Jesus; myself, believing her through God's grace; and all those joining and helping me till now; and all those who will come in the future, applying themselves to understand more

and more Jesus' designs for this foundation and fulfilling them completely (ECC 302).

It could be that moved by this conviction, soon after this letter, on September 2 of that same year, our Father Founder retook the same theme enhancing other aspects:

Nous avons été appelés, vous et moi, et tout les autres Missionnaires du Saint Esprit, à construire un grand Édifice... *non* seuls!... il s'agit d'une coopération: «¡Lo demás lo haré YO!» (ECC 144)⁷.

It is easy to understand that for a biblical scholar like him, the simile of the body given by Saint Paul would be an inspiration, even though he does not quote him according to his text.

Five months before his demise, our Father Founder reaffirms his faith on the Lord's promises, on the certainty he has of the importance of our characteristic mission, and on the conviction that all and each one of us who have been called have a task at the construction of this congregational building. For this—our Father Founder tells us—, we must have our eyes fixes on the Master (cf ECC 144); and, better yet, we must:

See through the eyes of Jesus, and that Jesus will see through our eyes!

Speak the way Jesus spoke, and that Jesus will speak through our lips!

Love the way Jesus loved, and that Jesus will love through our heart! (ECC166).

⁷ We have been called, you and I, and all the rest of Missionaries of the Holy Spirit, to build a great Building... but not alone!... it is a collaboration: «The rest I will do!».

- ⇒ To look at ourselves the way Jesus sees us;
- ⇒ To see our world with the eyes and heart of Jesus;
- ⇒ To fix our eyes on Jesus Christ Priest and Victim, contemplative and compassionate, just as Conchita and Father Felix did;
- ⇒ To make the decision to pass from discourse into life, from good wishes into action;

it is this the invitation we want to leave in the heart of each Missionary of the Holy Spirit, assured that, if we do our share, *the rest He will do.*

~ . ~ . ~ . ~

Beloved Conchita and Father Felix of Jesus:
pray to God for us,
so we,
having renewed our enthusiasm
for our beautiful vocation,
and being united among us,
will journey in creative fidelity,
towards the year 2014.
Amen.

Initials and abbreviations

- CC CABRERA DE ARMIDA C: *Cuenta de conciencia (Spiritual Journal) 1893-1936*. Mexico. Private edition.
- CD MISSIONARIES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: *Constitutions and determinations*. Mexico, 1994.
- ECC ROUGIER FJ: *Escritos, circulares y cartas I y II, (Writings, Circular Letters and Letters I and II)*, Spain, 1989.
- EE JOHN PAUL II: Apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa* (June 28, 2003).
- LG Vatican II: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church «Lumen Gentium».
- MND JOHN PAUL II: Apostolic Letter *Mane nobiscum Domine* (October 7, 2004).
- NMI JOHN PAUL II: Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (January 6, 2001).
- VC JOHN PAUL II: Apostolic exhortation *Vita Consecrata* (March 25, 1996).
- XIV GC MISSIONARIES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: *XIV General Chapter: Final Document*. Mexico, 2004.