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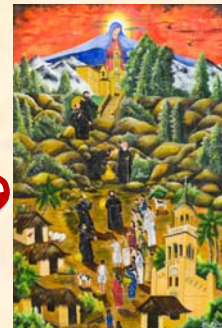


Online

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CAPITOLO NEWS

Servants of Hope in a Changing World



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ADDRESS OF PRIOR GENERAL TO THE HOLY FATHER

Holy Father,

In this setting, I wish to offer you my greetings and those of the Chapter Members present in this room, together with the greetings of every brother of the Order who accompanies us in prayer and fraternal affection on the five continents.

In this setting, I am pleased to express to you our most sincere thanks for having granted us this moment of "pause with you", as Jesus did with his disciples, despite the many commitments that occupy your days, with official audiences, the Synod of Amazonia – happening at the same time as our General Chapter - and so many other daily commitments.

Thank you so much!



Our Order of Servants of Mary has always been small since its beginnings (1233), yet always actively engaged in the local churches where it has spread and operates (in 2016 in Florence, during the Congress of the Italian Church, you visited the place where our Seven Fathers met and where they left, the Shrine of the Holy Annunciation, the beating heart of the Church and of the city of Florence). Our Seven First Fathers, Seven Friends, desired to dedicate their lives to the Lord and to the brothers after the example of Mary of Nazareth. In Mary of Nazareth, like them, we too recognize - as our oldest document of the origins reminds us - the true Founder of our Order. We draw inspiration from her to live in service to the world, to the Church and to every brother and sister.

Despite our limited size (about 700 friars), the Order is spread all over the world, where it is incorporated into the mix of different cultures and social and ecclesial realities, striving to announce and live the values of the Gospel in service and in fraternal life.

What I would like to highlight, in this setting, as the greatest reality of the Order, almost like a breath of multiple lungs, which we call the Servite Family. It comprises the friars - the Order - the cloistered nuns, the 19 Female congregations that live our Charism, the two Servite Secular Institutes, and a Secular Order that sees around 12,000 lay people engaged as Servants of Mary, and other lay groups, such as the Deaconries - which are family nuclei that live the Servite spirituality - and various other groups.

As a Servite Family we work together, in different parts of the world, to serve the People of God by announcing the Gospel of Mercy.



In our present General Chapter, as it comes to a close, we have been accompanied by the guiding theme: "Servants of Hope in a changing world". We have discussed and questioned the needs of the world and of the Church, the ways in which we are called to walk, and the tools with which to exercise our service. No comprehensive answer is possible, but we have on one hand accepted the sense of pluriculturalism and multiculturalism as a force for our Order and at the same time as a challenge for a new pastoral care of inclusion and integration. We often hear of "nationalisms" and "sovereign" realities; the history of our Founders shows us that they were men of communion, of fraternity and of peace, inviting us in this way to create networks of evangelical humanization.

This General Chapter has also produced some texts that seek to dispel torpor and fears so as to project us with hope and evangelical courage, with creativity and patience in the existential context of today, to become "a little seed" of proclamation, of witness and of upbuilding of humanity's "common home".

A brief and concrete Marian document was also drafted, a letter to the whole Order, the fruit of a reflection that opens up a commitment to life starting from the "little signs" that characterised Mary's journey of faith, indicators of feasible hope for living and for giving..

Holy Father, renewing our thanks for your welcome, at the conclusion of our General Chapter, we wish to offer you an icon painted by a cloistered nun that depicts our Founders, men of communion and unity, of friendship and service, and together our Servite liqueur, fruit of the ingenuity of a friar of the end of the 1800s, a liqueur that is still handcrafted by our friars at Monte Senario today – they do this as a sign of the sharing in the labour of every human being, people whom as St. Paul reminds us, must earn daily bread by the work of their hands.

Thank you, Holy Father. We await a word from you with expectancy to confirm us in our evangelical choices, so that we can always be "men of Hope in a changing world".

fra Gottfried M. Wolff o.s.m.,
Prior General