

# Indiction Letter

## XII General Chapter

### of the Congregation

### “Poor Servants of Divine Providence”

Verona, January 18, 2020

Beginning of the Week of prayer for Christian Unity

*«... that they may all be one.  
As you Father, are in me and I am in you,  
may they also be in us,  
so that the world may believe...».*  
(Jo 17, 21)

**Dear Sisters, Brothers and Members of the Calabrian Family,**

As we begin the great week of prayer which rises from all Christian Churches for the unity and harmony of all the baptized in Christ, I come to you with this letter which has the official character of **indiction of our next XII General Chapter of the Congregation. The Chapter will take place from February 14, 2021**, and will follow that of the Poor Servants of Divine Providence (Brothers), which will be celebrated between April and May 2020.

The text chosen for this week's prayer invites us to reflect on history as an experience of Divine Providence and at the same time of human welcoming.<sup>1</sup> We too will be able to look at the events of our last six years as a story led by the loving Providence of the Father, where the painful and difficult situations, as well as the happiest and most constructive events , welcomed and embraced by our humanity as sisters and mothers, are a living and uplifting part of that story which, seen with the eyes of God the Father, becomes a salvation story for us and for everyone.

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<sup>1</sup>Text for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Acts 27: 18 - 28: 10, "They showed us unusual kindness."

We are Poor Servants of Divine Providence Sisters, inserted in the body of the Church, we belong to the Lord and to the Opera: feeling like daughters of the Father, sisters among us and with others, gives us joy and confidence to face hopefully the future that Providence is preparing for us. Even the words of Saint John Calabria exhort us to hope: *«Let us trust in the Lord; I repeat, let's believe in the Lord with firm, unshakable, simple faith. ... at the helm of the ship is our heavenly Father; what to fear?»*<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, animated by this trust and certain that we have not only a *«glorious story to remember and to recount, but a great story still to be accomplished, we look to the future, where the Spirit is sending us in order to do even greater things»*.<sup>3</sup>

## **The XII General Chapter, a journey of communion**

The General Chapter is not an event that concerns individual participants, nor even just the Congregation, even if it involves the whole Calabrian Family. It is rather an ecclesiastic event, an event of salvation. It is good for us to remember the inspired words of card. Eduardo Pironio<sup>4</sup> on the profound meaning of a Chapter: *«A Chapter is an Easter celebration. For this, it must be placed in an essential Easter context; with all that it contains, cross and hope, death and resurrection. A Chapter ... has a great dimension of Easter newness - of new creation in the Spirit - and of firm and committed hope. ... It is always a recreation, which causes the spiritual richness of one's own Charism blossom in the Church and in the world»*. This is why we are aware that only in the light of the Holy Spirit, invoked and accepted, will our Chapters be an experience of Easter, of that full life which is made up of "cross and hope, death and resurrection".

It is also good to remember the indications of our Constitutions: "the General Chapter ... is a particular moment of grace in which the Congregation comes together, in spirit of fraternity in order to reflect on the life of the Congregation with the objective and serene evaluation of all that has been done in the previous term, on decisions and new changes to make, in order to discover the will of the heavenly Father for our religious Family ".<sup>5</sup> And again: "It is the responsibility of the General Chapter to safeguard the charismatic patrimony of the Congregation and, in harmony with this, promote an adequate renewal ".<sup>6</sup> Therefore, each Chapter is a moment of grace and listening to the Holy Spirit done together, in an atmosphere of prayer and fraternal affection. Before being a moment of reflection on practical issues, it is the spiritual experience of a return to the sources of the common personal and community call, for an ever more faithful, dynamic and creative response to the Charism.

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<sup>2</sup> J. Calabria, *Letters to Religious*, LXXVIII, 18 November 1952.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Vita Consecrata*, 110.

<sup>4</sup> Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life from 1976 to 1984.

<sup>5</sup> *Constitutions*, 136

<sup>6</sup> *Constitutions*, 137

## Theme of the XII General Chapter

The General Councils (Brothers and Sisters), gathered with the Delegates for the Spiritual Exercises and the meeting of 12-13 March 2019 - considering the contributions of the Delegates and the Mission in charges - in an atmosphere of listening, dialogue, prayer and discernment have chosen, as the common theme of the XII General Chapters:

### "THE PROPHECY OF COMMUNION"

Let ourselves be enlightened by the Casante who writes: *«I am convinced that communion is not built with theories, but with the willingness to let ourselves be inhabited by the Holy Spirit that can make us one body and one spirit...Communion is a prophecy for the present times, it has its roots up, in the bosom of the Trinity which by its nature is "communion in Love".<sup>7</sup> . Communion is a gift to be welcomed, but also our goal to be achieved as sons and daughters of Fr. Calabria. "The call to become a " prophecy of communion " extends to the whole Calabrian reality, as it is a reality born of a Charism which is expressed in relationships, in choices and also in structures, in activities".<sup>8</sup>*

The path we have taken helps us to be aware of what Pope Francis says: *"it is in communion, even if it costs effort, that a Charism is revealed authentically and mysteriously fruitful".<sup>9</sup>* The prophecy of communion is not only the theme on which to confront, but above all it is the spiritual environment necessary to glimpse the will of God on the whole Calabrian Family, on the Church and on the world and decide to carry it out!

We feel urged **by the challenges coming from suffering humanity**, which is thirsting for the Gospel and for the Fatherhood/Motherhood of God. Even **our relationships in community** need to grow further in fraternity and our spiritual life to be purified! In the face of all this, it is **relevant and urgent to respond now** with the evangelical strength of the Charism inherited from Saint John Calabria, summarized in the great Opera Program: *"Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow ..."*<sup>10</sup>

Today's world awaits the announcement of the "Good News" of grace, that is, the announcement that we are loved freely because we are children of God the Father and, by virtue of the love that is given to us, we can love, cherish and promote life around us. The grace of the Gospel that our Charism communicates is also a way of unity, Father Miguel also reminds us: *"If we focus on the Charism first of all, unity and communion will follow as a consequence".<sup>11</sup>*

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<sup>7</sup> M. TOFFUL, "Towards the prophecy of communion", Reflections, 27 September 2019

<sup>8</sup> M. TOFFUL, "Towards the prophecy of communion ", Reflections, September 27, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 130

<sup>10</sup> Mt 6:33-34

<sup>11</sup> M. Tofful, "Towards the prophecy of communion", Reflections, September 27, 2019.

## Let's remember some steps of the current term

At the beginning of the six-year term, we set out to grow as "*mystical communities*" capable of having a profound relationship with the Lord and with others, especially among us and with the poorest. United with the True Vine and among us, we can bear fruit by loving the *peripheries of the world* where the Father and the mission send us.<sup>12</sup> Our mission will be truly apostolic, bearer of the Gospel and promoter of life for many destitute and humiliated brothers, to the extent that our communities will be places of *koinonia* and our relationships will speak the language of communion. The welcoming and respect for personal, cultural and generational differences is the most current challenge for our communities and for the whole Calabrian Family of today and the future. This was underlined by our Casante who writes: "*The experience of the love of communion that reaches us in advance, highlights our differences not as separation, division, split, but as an opportunity to build and manifest communion*".<sup>13</sup> This path is urgent to progress towards the prophecy of communion.

The *Message of the Extraordinary Assembly of the mid-six-year term* made us reflect on the essential need to live the relationship with God Trinity, as a living source of communion and unity from which a "*style of relationship*" flows with others and in the mission, so that our service becomes ever more available and free of charge towards the current poverty.<sup>14</sup>

The "*Ratio Formationis*", the drafting of which has involved us greatly concerning every Sister and community, is a tool that will help us most to take over and taste the beauty of the Charism that is manifested in our identity as Poor Servants. The charismatic identity is a free gift from the Father, but it is also the goal for each one to strive for and orient the new generations.

Recalling these steps in the light of the two letters of which the Casante made a gift to the Opera in this term: "*The joy of radicalism*" and "*The joy of prophecy*", will help to discern in the light of the Spirit, the appropriate ways to safeguard and make current, in the various historical and cultural situations, our Charism and the spiritual patrimony it derives.<sup>15</sup>

## Sharing and participation

The journey we are pursuing, which began with the preparation for the General Chapter of the Brothers, is a response to the appeal of the Holy Spirit to put us in mutual listening to every reality that makes up the Calabrian Family, grasping the signs of communion that He is already doing in it. We believe that this communion is a gift from the Lord that He wants to make grow in us and in the Opera.

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<sup>12</sup> See Final Document of the XI General Chapter, A "*mystical fraternity*" with the heart in the *peripheries of the world*".

<sup>13</sup> M Tofful, "*Towards the prophecy of communion*", Reflections, September 27, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> See *Message to the Sisters, Challenges - Priorities - Paths*.

<sup>15</sup> See CIVCSVA, *For new wine, new wine skins*, 48, Rome January 6, 2017.

Also our General Chapter, following up on the experience started, will follow the synodal style as a "peculiar form in which the Church lives and works".<sup>16</sup> We therefore continue to walk together, as a Calabrian Family, with a heart available and open to listening to everyone, to take on in a collegial and co-responsible way the choices and orientations that the Chapters Generals of our Congregations will indicate us as the fruit of synodal discernment.

In particular, the participation of all of us is expressed in the following ways:

1. Each Sister and Community feels part of this "journey made together in the Opera" by involving themselves with prayer, availability and participation in what will be proposed for the preparation. The prayer of the XII General Chapter of the Calabrian Family will continue to accompany our entire chapter journey.

2. Each Delegation, Territory and Mission concluded the phase of the pre-chapter Assemblies of our Poor Servant Brothers in the different realities where we belong, participating with some representatives. We continue to accompany with our active presence and with our prayer and offering the initiatives in view of the approaching Chapter of the Brothers, accepting, after the celebration of the same, the conclusions and guidelines that will be proposed by the Final Document.

3. Each Sister is called to elect the participant Sisters according to the indications provided by the Constitutions. To this end, the communities will organize the meeting to proceed with the voting on a date between February 2 (Presentation of the Lord) and February 11 (Our Lady of Lourdes).

4. Each Council of Delegation, according to what the Constitutions indicate in n. 146, will scrutinize the ballot papers, then choosing that Sister from among the elected ones, who together with the Delegate will participate in the XII General Chapter of the Brothers. The General Council will do the scrutiny for the European Territory and the list for Kenya-Philippines.

5. The General Council, the Delegates and the Chapter representatives of the Delegations and of the European Territory (4 in total), starting from April 26, 2020, will participate in the Chapter of our Brothers in these moments: the spiritual exercises, the opening celebration, formation on some topics and the days foreseen for the synodal discussion (Brothers - Sisters - Lay people) of the *Instrumentum Laboris*.

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<sup>16</sup> International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the life and mission of the Church*, Rome March 2 2018, n. 43: «In the gift and commitment of communion we find the source, form and purpose of synodality in that it expresses the specific "modus vivendi et operandi" of the people of God in the responsible and orderly participation of all its members in the discernment and implementation of the ways of the mission».

6. The Sisters themselves will gather in the Mother House from May 4, 2020 - the time necessary to agree together on the logistical details, the general program, to establish the preparatory Commission, to establish the pre-chapter Assemblies in each Delegation, Territory and Mission; to propose initiatives of spiritual preparation and whatever else will be necessary.

## **Participants in the XII General Chapter**

In accordance with the resolution of the previous General Chapter which set the participants in the Chapter Assembly, the General Council, in the percentage of 20%, in order to encourage "a broader and more forward-looking representation"<sup>17</sup> of all realities of the Congregation<sup>18</sup> has determined that the number of Chapter members is 22 Sisters, including 8 Sisters by right and 14 eligible.

Participants by right: 8 Sisters (5 from the General Council and 3 Delegate Sisters).

To be elected<sup>19</sup> according to their own lists:

European Territory:	4 Sisters
Latin America Delegation:	4 Sisters
Angola Delegation:	2 Sisters
India Delegation:	2 Sisters
Philippines and Kenya Mission:	2 Sisters

The General Council has seen well to increase the numerical presence of the participants in the spirit of the motivations presented by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, which clearly urge to favor the widest possible representation of all realities, especially thinking of different cultural and generational expressions that constitute the face of our religious family today. The enriching variety of presences and experiences will contribute to "*guaranteeing the construction of a desired and favourable future ... in a spirit of research purified by the sole desire to discern God's plan.*"<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *For new wines, new wine-skins*, 49, Rome, Jan 6, 2017

<sup>18</sup> *Constitutions*, 136: The Chapter «*should be made in such a way as to represent the whole Institute, to be a true sign of its unity in charity. All the Sisters are co-responsible for this*».

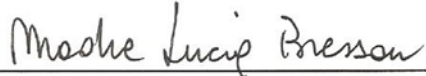
<sup>19</sup> *Constitutions*, 141: «*In the election of the participants for the Chapter have active voice all the professed religious even with annual vows; yet have passive voice only the religious with triennial vows of at least six years of profession*».

<sup>20</sup> *For new wines, new wine-skins*, 48-49, Rome, Jan 6, 2017

## Conclusion

I invite all religious sisters and brothers, and lay people, to continue praying to God the merciful Father, so that our Chapter appointments, so important for the life and mission of our entire charismatic Calabrian Family, may be fruitful in communion for the Church and for the Opera. The Holy Spirit may increase in us the desire to seek more fully the Kingdom of God and its justice and make us all one. Reinvigorated by the strength of the Word and the Eucharist, we will live the prophecy of communion together.

Invoking upon all of us the blessing of the Lord, through the intercession of Mary Immaculate, Mother of the Opera and our Holy Founder Father John Calabria, I greet all with fraternal affection.



Superior General