

HOMILY AT THE CLOSING EUCHARIST OF THE XXXVII GENERAL CHAPTER

Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

Nemi, October 14th, 2022

As we celebrate the closing Eucharist of the Chapter, I would like to propose the gospel story that we have just heard as the paradigm of what is expected of us as pilgrim missionaries of hope in communion. Pope Francis suggested it to us in his message: *“Mary the pilgrim, Mary journeying, Mary who arose in haste to go and serve. After saying her “yes” to God through the archangel Gabriel, she departed in haste to go to her cousin Elizabeth, to share the gift and to place herself at her service. In this too, may Mary be an example to you, for your life and for your mission”*. I will propose some possible tracks that help us to learn from Mary the pilgrim and mother of hope and of communion.

1.- Mary, the Oblate. We have wondered in this Chapter about our identity. It is a question that we share with many in the face of the brutal reality of injustice and destruction that surrounds us. The Church also wonders about her identity and her sense of mission. Deep down we wonder about our own mystery: Who am I and why am I here? Let us learn from Mary to respond from a hopeful oblation. Faced with a mystery that surpasses her, Mary places her whole life in the hands of God and in this way she makes it possible for the Word to become flesh in her womb. She does not understand everything, she does not know what she has to do, but she has heard that everything will be the work of the Spirit and she puts all her trust in Him, collaborating body and soul with God's project. As she feels her body being transformed, she learns to know and love that mystery that inhabits her. **Constitution 2** tells us that in order to be cooperators with Jesus, the Oblates *“leave everything”* and feel compelled *“to know him more deeply, to identify with him and to let him live in themselves. Striving to reproduce him in their own lives, they give themselves obediently to the Father, even to the point of death, and place themselves at the service of the people of God with selfless love”* (Cf. CCRR 2). *“Mary Immaculate, in her faith response and total openness to the call of the Spirit, is the model and guardian”* (C.13) of our oblation.

Let us learn like Mary to renew our oblation every day, knowing the Lord more intimately and walking with zeal along the paths of the mission.

2.- **Mary the pilgrim.** The Gospel text tells us that Mary leaves in a hurry. In this pilgrimage there is no time for immobility or self-referentiality. Pilgrimage with hope requires leaving oneself and traveling the paths, sometimes winding, that lead us to the others, to the other, to the OTHER. I like to think of Mary on a pilgrimage to that mountain village. Her bare feet sow beauty because they leave a footprint pregnant with hope towards the full manifestation of the Saviour that she already carries in her womb. Mary walks in communion with everything created and the entire creation is blessed as she passes. Let us learn from Mary and her contemplative walk, to care for and respect our common home. Furthermore, her encounter with Elizabeth is an epiphany of her own identity and mission: blessed among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Let us learn from Mary to go out to meet others. In them we will discover what we are in the eyes of God. Let's do it with a simple life, open to others, leaving in our common home the mark of praise and beauty and never the mark of hatred, destruction or waste.

3.- **Mary the servant.** The pilgrim who carries the Saviour knows that this mystery that inhabits her can only be lived by putting herself at her service, intentionally making herself a neighbour to the one who needed her: Elizabeth. If we want to feed our hope, we have to do it like Mary does, putting ourselves at the service of the poor and walking with them. Let us not forget that the communion promised by Jesus is also manifested when, like Him and in memory of Him, we wash one another's feet. We say of Mary that she is the Mother of hope and the Mother of the Church communion. She bears these roles because she has become a humble servant of the Lord and of his people, the poor. Let us learn from Mary to go on pilgrimage serving every time with more love and dedication.

Dear brothers. I feel that Mary has blessed us in this Chapter. She has done it discreetly, with a smile looking over our entire family. The pope, recalling the experience of Saint Eugene 200 years ago, invited us "to take Mary as a traveling companion, so that she always accompanies you on your pilgrimage." In order to be the pilgrims of hope in communion that we have dreamed of in our Chapter, we have to learn to walk hand in hand with Mary and sing with her, full of the Spirit, the revolutionary praise of the Magnificat that shows the way to be Sowers and leaven of "*the beatitudes in the heart of the world*" (C.11). Let us walk living "*the joys and sufferings of missionaries in intimate union with her, Mother of Mercy*" and let us announce, with our lifestyle, "*God's final victory over all evil*". (C.10)

Come walk with us Mary, pilgrim of hope in communion. Give us your hand and your smile.

Teach us to look with the heart, to discover the merciful passage of God. Teach us to look at those whom no one looks at and discover that they are the ones chosen by Jesus as signs of His presence: the small and poor, the humble and vulnerable. Make us worthy to walk with them every day.

Take care, Mother, of our common home and our Oblate home. Help us discover what we need to do to make the planet and our communities a home where Jesus can be born. May our communion be the seed and leaven of universal brotherhood for the world.

At the foot of the cross and the crucified, teach us, Mary, to look at the world with the eyes of the crucified Saviour. As we contemplate you, Mary, may we commit ourselves to collaborating with the One who will bring God's definitive victory over evil.

We are your Oblates: give us your smile, as you have done since our beginning. She intercedes for us, together with Saint Eugene and all the Oblate saints who have preceded us and make us embark on bold paths to become authentic pilgrims of hope in communion, who live and announce the Gospel. Amen.