

**MISSIONARY OBLATES OF MARY IMMACULATE**  
The Superior General

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**Letter of the Superior General: Let us walk together listening to the call to care for the common home.**

**LJC et MI**

Dear Brother Oblates and members of our Charismatic Family,

September 1st is the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation. It is an initiative of Pope Francis who has also written the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* (LS) on care for the common home. The 37th General Chapter told us that care for the Earth "*is of special concern to us in our missionary work. We have become aware of our insufficient efforts to care for the environment. We are challenged, therefore, to commit ourselves to the fullest extent possible to make ecological conversion a priority as a fundamental part of our lives and as an integral part of our evangelisation*". (Pilgrims of Hope in Communion PEC n. 11,1).

I am aware that some, perhaps even many, question whether care for the common home is really important to us. There is even a certain resistance, if not opposition, to accept some of the proposals of Pope Francis in his Encyclical *Laudato Si'*. I would not like to enter here into scientific, political or sociological considerations that certainly need to be debated. My intention is to invite everyone to read, pray and seek ways to put into practice what the Holy Spirit can inspire in us as we confront the texts of *Laudato Si'* and the Document of our 37th General Chapter (PEC).

I have asked our General Service for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation to prepare tools to help us do that prayerful reading in community to "*study *Laudato Si'* affirming its value and urgency in all our communities. Sustain and promote our programmes and activities in this area, linking with other groups through the *Laudato si'* Church Platform for Action. Be aware of the simple things we can do in our communities, e.g., recycling.*" (PEC 15.1)

In this letter I would like to emphasise three dimensions in which we can grow as a charismatic family responding to the call of ecological conversion.

**1. Ecological Conversion: a call to live an ecological spirituality**

Some years ago, I read an article reflecting on our dehumanising pace of life. According to the author, a monk, this way of living causes a triple rupture: rupture with God, with creation and with others. The monastic life proposes a humanising rhythm of life that is marked daily by an encounter with God, with all that is created through work, with the community and with the poor. The conclusion, which we can make our own, is that in order to humanise our

society we must promote the experience of reconnecting and growing in these dimensions which, besides being deeply interconnected, serve as communicating vessels.

The fact that we are used to looking at the world through the eyes of the crucified (C.4), enables us to listen with our hearts to the cries of the poor and the groaning in travail of all creation waiting to be delivered from corruption (Rom 8:18-23). We have to recognise that many of these painful cries are provoked by us, by our actions and by our omissions. This is what Patriarch Bartholomew has called the sin against creation, something we must repent of and correct. At the General Chapter, we acknowledged our inadequate efforts. Each of us could make our own examination of conscience.

I do not believe that cultivating an ecological spirituality is in contradiction with our charism; on the contrary, I hope it can help us to grow. As missionaries, we follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ who chose to announce the Good News from the poor and invited us to trust in God's Providence by speaking to us of the lilies of the field and the sparrows. To make us understand the transforming power of the Kingdom that we proclaim, he spoke to us of the seeds that grow into great bushes and how they grow in secret and how they bear fruit according to the soil in which they are sown. Jesus invites us to discern the signs of the times as we do the winds that announce warmth or rain. Creation is shaken when Jesus dies on the cross and his rising from the tomb on the third day causes the dawn of each new day to renew our hope in the new humanity and new creation born in his resurrection. He directs history by sending his Spirit to complete his work of recapitulation so that God may be "all in all" (Eph 1:10; 1 Cor 15:24-28).

The hopeful contemplation of creation from the perspective of redemption and definitive recapitulation leads us to love God more, to identify with him, to let him live in us (Constitution 2) and to serve him as his co-workers (C.1). Our relationship with Jesus, carefully cultivated, leads us to discover the Incarnate Word, through whom everything was created and in his creation we discover his presence. We praise that presence every day when we pray the Psalms as we praise him present in the poor. Authentic ecological conversion will lead us to grow in intimacy with Christ and will also lead us to action and commitment, for in communion with Christ even the simplest actions take on a transformative dimension beyond all expectations.

Let us, then, be the first to rise up to protest against anything that prevents creatures from responding to the vocation and mission for which they were created. Let us be the first defenders of life, especially human life from its gestation to its natural end, passing through all stages of its development, being creatively active in trying everything in our power to favour the human, Christian and holy development of each person, especially caring for the most vulnerable and caring for our endangered common home. Each member of our charismatic family, each institution and especially the parishes we animate (PEC n. 13) are invited to live and promote an ecological spirituality imbued with our charism.

## **2.- Ecological conversion: missionaries of the poor in dialogue and going out.**

*"We must not forget that the cry of the earth is the cry of the poor, to whom we give our preference". (PEC 11.2). We are missionaries and we go to meet the poor because Jesus has sent us. As pilgrims of hope in communion, our "first service in the Church is to proclaim Christ and his Kingdom to the most abandoned" (C. 5). For a missionary, everything that*

happens is an opportunity to fulfil his mission. The care of our common home offers us great opportunities to meet the poor and others who, with different motivations, are striving for the same goal. We must go out to meet the women and men who are adopting a more sustainable lifestyle in response to the cries of our Mother Earth and the cries of the poor. To go out to meet, to dialogue and to work together; to go out to meet, to proclaim Christ and his Kingdom to the most abandoned. What an immense field is open to us!

Reading C. 7 in this context, we can find ourselves walking side by side with other brothers and sisters in our Church and with those who confess Christ with whom we can collaborate in ecumenical actions to care for our common home. Also, with those who, without recognising Christ as their Saviour, work unknowingly to promote the goods of the coming Kingdom. The care of our common home is and will be a field of dialogue and collaboration between believers of different religions who, from their own tradition, proclaim that the Creator wants us to be brothers and sisters responsible for one another and for all of creation. It will also be a place of dialogue and encounter with so many of our contemporaries who do not profess to be believers but who are aware of the need to promote the sustainability of our planet: a place of encounter and even of first proclamation based on mutual respect and collaboration. We walk together with other charismatic families and other social and ecclesial agents and even with inter-religious institutions in various fields, including the promotion of fair financial investments that respect the care of the Planet. We are all called to join in this common march, and I dare to invite you to put into practice the missionary actions proposed by the 37th General Chapter.

*"Our mission, in fact, leads us everywhere primarily to those whose condition cries out for a hope and a salvation that only Christ can offer in fullness. They are the poor in their multiple aspects: it is to them that our preferences go"* (C.5). The care of our common home is a place of encounter with the poor, victims and called to be the protagonists of change. Always close to them, we have to find ways to put them at the centre of our actions and our lives. Better still, we must learn from them how to live better in order to take care of our common home. In this sense, we should listen to the Indigenous peoples who accumulate ancestral wisdom about the care and respect for our Mother Earth. What would be the most appropriate platforms to learn what the poor and Indigenous peoples can share and teach us?

The care of our common home can be a privileged place of missionary collaboration of our whole charismatic family. In particular, the Chapter speaks of the laity (PEC F. *Laudato Si* n.4). We have to learn together, we have to learn from each other, we have to pray together, we have to work together. Together we have to fight for the poor and make them the centre of our discernment. Could we choose one or two concrete actions that we all engage in as a sign of our family commitment to care for our common home? It would be something within everyone's reach, but which could have a significant impact. For example, let me dream that we would commit ourselves to one of these actions: to reduce the use of plastic, to recycle our waste, to generate clean energy, to consume responsibly with an eye to justice, to facilitate access to drinking water for all, etc.

Since the youth of our societies have shown global leadership in raising our awareness in caring for our common home and ensuring a sustainable future, I ask all the young people of our charismatic family, men and women, lay and consecrated, to lead us in this field. Please, young people, help us to get down to work with concrete commitments to care for

our common home. Help us to walk together with you and for you and future generations. In you, young people, I place great hope.

### **3.- Ecological conversion: the joy of evangelical poverty.**

*"Each Oblate and each community, each ministry and each Oblate institution will undertake a process of reflection and concrete action leading to a "prophetic and contemplative lifestyle" (LS 222), to an "attitude of heart" which looks at creation through the eyes of the crucified Saviour (C 4), and with the loving gaze of Jesus (LS 226; cf. Mk 10:21). (PEC F. Laudato SI' n.3). Our way of living is a preaching of the Gospel. If we speak of an authentic conversion to care for our common home, we must go to the bottom of our hearts and also of our pockets. It is easier to put solar panels on our roofs than to change our lifestyle. We cannot be like those whom Jesus criticized because, knowing the Law and preaching it, their hearts and actions were far from fulfilling it.*

By living a simple and supportive lifestyle like that of Jesus, let us all listen to the invitation to live the evangelical counsel of poverty (Mt 5:3; 6:24-34; 19:21; Acts 2:42-47), something that we consecrated persons have committed ourselves to radically embody by professing it in our oblation. We are called to adopt a way of life that *"leads us to live in closer communion with Christ and with the poor, thus challenging the abuses of power and wealth and proclaiming the coming of a new world freed from selfishness and ready to share"* (C.20). I wonder how we can do this from the perspective of caring for the common home? A way of life that cares for the planet and at the same time is a channel for living in closer communion with Christ and the poor. Let us look to Jesus, let us live in his way, and let us enter into that dynamic whereby he, being rich, became poor in order to enrich us with his poverty (2 Cor 8,9).

The CC and RR 21 and 22 offer us some indications that we should translate into our particular contexts: putting goods in common, simple lifestyle, giving collective witness of evangelical detachment, avoiding all luxury and all appearance of luxury, avoiding all immoderate gain and accumulation of goods, submitting to the common law of work, prudent administration, trusting in Providence to use with audacity even what is necessary to help the poor, etc. Is this an unattainable ideal? Let us at least set out, as individuals, families, communities and institutions, to move ever closer to this ideal.

We need to discern how our lifestyle and our way of consuming impacts our common home and the lives of the poor. This is essential to our identity and mission. It is not an easy task because we have to fight against the inertia that invites us to blind, dehumanising and ever more accelerated consumption. Distracted by so many things, we do not realise that our joy is fading because we are reducing our relationship with God to a minimum, we are connected at all times to a virtual world that disconnects us from God, from creation, from our closest brothers and sisters in the community and also and above all, we are unconcerned about the poor and about caring for our common home. Unfortunately, we justify a good many of our decisions for daily consumption as necessary for our mission but without really thinking about their missionary impact.

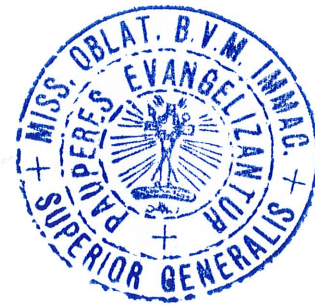
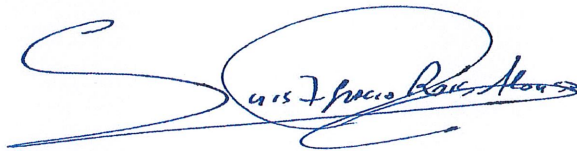
To overcome this kind of "modern acedia" the key word is **discernment**. We need to make a communitarian discernment that helps us to open our eyes to reality and to the Holy Spirit who always invites us to better love and serve the Lord whose co-workers we are and to share

what we are and what we have with the poor. In this sense it would be good to discern whether we are going in the direction recommended by LS 23: *"limit the use of non-renewable resources as much as possible, moderate consumption, maximise the efficiency of use, reuse and recycle"*. Living in this way will do us immense good in order to develop a more evangelical life in community at the service of the poor. Do we dare to go on pilgrimage together along these paths?

I am convinced that the ecological conversion called for by Laudato Si and PEC requires a personal and collective conversion that will lead us to a change of life in order to leave in our world a mark of charity and tenderness towards the poor and towards our common home. Like Mary, let us live a simple life that leaves no other footprint than that of those who follow Jesus, sowing hope and communion. She is the Mother of the new humanity and of the new creation and in the Mystery of her Assumption into heaven, the poor girl of Nazareth reaches the fullness God dreamed of for his creature and this fills us with hope because we share her destiny. With her, hand in hand, let us walk to the rhythm of the Church which will celebrate the synodal assembly in October. To the Mother Assumed into heaven and Queen of all creation we entrust our pilgrimage to say an ever greater Yes to God's will for us and to be more responsible for caring for the poor and for our common home. May St. Eugene and our Blessed Oblates continue to inspire and protect us to renew ourselves more ardently in our common charism.

Havana (Cuba), August 15, 2023

Your brother, pilgrim of hope in communion.



Fr. Luis Ignacio Rois Alonso, OMI  
Superior General.