



MISSIONARY OBLATES OF MARY IMMACULATE

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LJC et MI

The feminine genius in the Oblate charism

Pozuelo de Alarcón, September 16, 2023

I am grateful for the invitation of the *Misioneras Oblatas de María Inmaculada* to participate in the Congress that they are organizing on the feminine genius of our charismatic family, while I congratulate them on the celebration of the 25th anniversary of their arrival in this house to begin their adventure. In many ways, I feel personally involved in this life story that enriches our charismatic family.

I imagine that the term “female genius” has been chosen by the *Oblatas*, echoing the teachings of popes in recent times.¹ The feminine genius of our charism is the way in which the gift of the Spirit that has been given to us has been incarnated in the women who have welcomed it within various historical realities. In this meeting, we are invited to listen to the women, consecrated or lay, who are part of our charismatic family. I will not attempt anything other than offer a voice and facilitate our conversation with the aim of discovering and deepening what the Spirit is giving us. We must learn from these women, consecrated and lay, what is the feminine genius of our charism.

Considering the current situation of our Church and our world, addressing this issue seems to me necessary and urgent. It is true that it is not the first time that this has been considered.² The novelty of this meeting is that for the first time, we are gathered as a charismatic family to discover and reflect on the feminine genius in our charism as the only theme and that this has been organized by the *Misioneras Oblatas de María Inmaculada*. Undoubtedly, from their own experience, they will make a significant contribution.

I want to thank all of you who live our charism for allowing the Holy Spirit to incarnate it in your womanly body, heart and spirit. I hope that this Congress will help us to make a pilgrimage together to bring forth many fruits in the present and for the future of our charismatic family. If I speak, it is to help us listen to them and to discover, learn, share and celebrate the gift of the Spirit that is the feminine genius of our charism.

1.- The evolution of the charism.

In the Acts of the Apostles, we find the story of the conversion of the first pagans to faith in Jesus Christ. For the first communities, it was not easy to imagine the reality that Jesus

¹ It seems that it was used for the first time by John Paul II in *Mulieris Dignitatem* and later it appears in his catechesis and that of Benedict XVI and Francis.

² For example, at the Oblate Congress on the charism in 2015, two authors developed this theme in their interventions (Published in *Oblatio V*, 2016/3. Inmaculada Pérez, OMI p.531-538; Illeana Chinnici, COMI p. 625-631).

Christ introduced with his life, death and resurrection. It is true that they had lived with him before his Easter. They had also seen him risen and had received the Holy Spirit. However, no one had an instruction manual for the mission or the organization of the communities. It was difficult for them to understand that salvation was also for pagans. In this context, Luke tells us about the conversion of a Roman centurion and his entire family. To justify the baptism of the house of Cornelius, Peter says that the **“Spirit had descended on them as it did on us at the beginning”**, concluding: *“Well, if God has given them the same gift that he has given us, because they have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to oppose God?”* (cf. Acts 11, 1-18).

We can apply this same experience to our charismatic family. We are increasingly aware that “the Spirit has descended on them as he did on us at the beginning.” That “them” are all the people who, by the grace of the Spirit, have received, like us at the beginning, our same charismatic gift: men and women, consecrated and lay people. We too praise God for this marvelous reality.

“At the beginning” of our charism is a man, Saint Eugene de Mazenod. It is he who first received this gift of the Spirit and in him began a process that lasted for more than two hundred years of history. His experience will be an inescapable point of reference. Already during his lifetime, we can see that there is an expansion of the charism and also an evolution or, if preferred, a progressive awareness of its uniqueness. Saint Eugene reinterpreted and made this charism evolve at the pace of his missionaries who faced new experiences in new places.³

At the end of the 19th century, but especially throughout the 20th century, our charism expanded, not only in various places through the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, but also among people who embraced other forms of consecrated life. and among the laity. The beatification and canonization of Saint Eugene are moments of special light that have made us more aware that the charism belongs to the Church and is shared by others, beyond the Congregation that Saint Eugene founded.⁴

In order to discover what the feminine genius brings to our charism, it is necessary to learn to read our history with the eyes of a woman. The sensitivity of the feminine genius will help us to find new riches that have not yet been explored and to put new light on what has already been assimilated. From this perspective we will have to reread the life of Saint Eugene and also study the new forms of life that have been born, inspired by his very charism.

There is much to explore in Eugene's complex relationship with the women in his family and with others, from his childhood until his death. We should also pay more attention to those traits of the male Eugene de Mazenod that resonate in a special way in the female world and see how they are appearing in the women of our charismatic family. A study is also needed regarding those traits that the different Congregations or Institutes of a life of special consecration have accentuated and how this charism appears among the laity. All this exercise will result in a polyhedral figure in which we will discover a harmony that only the Holy Spirit can create. The task of this Congress will be to discover the faces of that polyhedron that is our charismatic family today.

³ Frank Santucci studies this in “Eugene de Mazenod Co-operator of Christ the Savior communicates his Spirit”. AOSR Rome, 2004.

⁴ This was expressed on numerous occasions by Fr. Zago.

2.- Being Mary today for the Church and the world.

“The Lord did not want to leave the Church without this icon of womanhood.” (Evangelii Gaudium n. 285) and we could say the same for our charism. Mary embodies that feminine icon in an eminent way. I think it is crucial that we are called to be Mary today, in our world and in our Church. Not only to be like Mary, but to prolong what the Spirit did in her body, spirit and soul. She was the one full of grace and also the missionary disciple who, following Jesus, fully cooperated with God's plan of salvation. Woman, daughter, sister, friend, wife, mother, she was in relationship with her peers, but she was also in relationship with God and is in relationship with the Church. The humble servant of the Lord announced, with her life, the Good News that God shows mercy and remembers the destitute and the humiliated and he chooses them so that his saving plan reaches everyone, as she sings in her Magnificat.

When Saint Eugene received the grace of pontifical approval of the Congregation he said: “Oblates of Mary Immaculate, **hopefully we understand well what we are**”.⁵ I believe that in these first two hundred years of our history we have gradually discovered “what we are” and what it means to be Mary for our charism. We begin to understand it from the very experience of Saint Eugene. The letter of Father Deschâtelets, Superior General, “Our vocation and our life in intimate union with Mary Immaculate”, is another milestone.⁶ The CC and RR of 1982 mark another important moment of becoming aware of our being Mary. Today we are living a moment of similar density and importance. The time has come for women to show us from their experience the richness of this dimension in our charism.

I hope this Congress can help us discern where the Holy Spirit is leading us. Less than a month ago, at the Shrine of Guadalupe, contemplating her image, I expressed in the form of a consecration something that could serve as an inspiration to continue developing our charismatic identity around Mary. We want to relearn that identity from a woman's heart.⁷

Pope Francis concludes his programmatic document *Evangelii Gaudium* with some numbers dedicated to Mary. These numbers may also inspire our pilgrimage. With the Church we are discovering that this essential dimension for us is also essential for our world. More than a devotion, Mary occupies an essential position for our charismatic identity. Today, almost two hundred years after the pontifical approval of the Constitutions and Rules of the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, we continue to discover what the Spirit has given to the poor with our charism. And to learn to be Mary, women have an essential role.

Without a doubt, we must delve into anthropological and multidisciplinary studies on women from a Christian humanist vision. I encourage these studies to be conducted, applying them to the concrete forms of life in which the feminine genius is manifested in our charism. We want to hear the Good News of the female charism, the Good News of women, created in the image of God and called in equal dignity with men to participate in the full

⁵ May we understand well what we are! I hope that the Lord will give us this grace, with the assistance and by the protection of our holy Mother, the Immaculate Mary, for whom we must have a great devotion in our Congregation. Does it not seem to you that it is a sign of predestination to bear the name of Oblates of Mary, that is, consecrated to God under the patronage of Mary, a name the Congregation bears as a family name held in common with the most holy and immaculate Mother of God? It is enough to make others jealous; but it is the Church who has given us this beautiful name. We receive it with respect, love and gratitude, proud of our dignity and of the rights that it gives us to the protection of her who is All Powerful in God's presence.” Letter to Henri Tempier, March 20, 1826, EO VII no. 231

⁶ <https://www.omiworld.org/wp-content/uploads/Circular-Letter-191.pdf>

⁷ Homily in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, August 24, 2023

Father General, a pilgrim at the feet of Guadalupe | OMI World

communion that God offers us. This Congress should lead us to value the specific feminine genius and to help so that it can be fully developed at all levels and in an integral way in our charismatic family, our society and our Church.

What does the concrete experience of women who live the charism reveal to us in order to be Mary for the Church and the world today?

3. The diversity and complementarity of genders and forms of life.

We need to remember that the genders are called to complementarity and communion: man and woman he created them, in the image of God. Without that complementarity of the diverse, there is no communion. This fact affects the bodily, spiritual, intellectual condition, etc. of each gender. In this sense, it is highly valuable to share what we can contribute from each gender to discover what the feminine genius contributes to our charism. I think this is another of the achievements of this Congress where we are invited to walk together to freely share what we are discovering and experiencing.

Thinking of our charismatic family, this complementarity must also extend to the various forms of life, lay and of special consecration, in which this feminine genius manifests itself. Indeed, if we accept that the Spirit has gifted this charism to lay, married, single, and consecrated women, we must be attentive to all these states of life without neglecting any of them.

The diversity of genders and ways of life must be respected and sustained so that they express their singularity, while we promote an effective complementarity to progress towards the fulfillment of the divine dream of communion. In short, it is the Trinitarian model that has been imprinted on us since creation that is taking shape in humanity through diversity and complementarity. Jesus and his Gospel will always be the reference we need so that this tension between diversity and complementarity generates life and communion.

How can we make a path in our charismatic family so that the tension between diversity and complementarity generates life and helps us discover what our being Mary means for the world and the Church today?

4.- Some areas to dialogue, discover and develop the feminine genius in our charism

On January 17, 1851, Saint Eugene wrote; “You know, my dear son, that my great imperfection is passionately loving the children that God has given me. **There is no mother's love that equals it.**”⁸ On December 2, 1854, he wrote to Father Mouchette: “I have always thanked God for a particular gift that he wished to grant me; because He gave me this temperament of heart, this outpouring of love that is unique to me and that is poured out on each one without harm to others, as it is similar, I would dare say, to God's love for men. I say that it is this feeling, and I recognize that it comes from the one who is

⁸ EO 1,11. General Postulation, Rome, 1987. Letter to Father Baret; 21,1 17-1-51.

the source of all love, which has provoked in the hearts of my children that reciprocity of love that constitutes the distinctive character of our beloved family.”⁹

In everything we will talk about, I would like to always keep in mind these texts that describe the heart of Saint Eugene: a father's and a mother's heart with which he loves passionately, after the manner of God. The grace that Eugene has received belongs to us. The feminine genius is called to embody that heart in a particular way in its spirituality, its mission and its community. I present these three areas from which we will be able to dialogue, though not exhaustively. I simply do it from some experiences of Saint Eugene and some thoughts of Pope Francis to facilitate the dialogue during the congress and to motivate an in-depth study afterwards.

4.1 Spirituality: cultivating the feminine experience of God.

We understand spirituality not in a reductive way, for example, thinking only of the pious practices with which humanity expresses its ritual relationship with God. Discovering God in everything and relating to Him encompasses and affects all dimensions of the person. We all live our relationship with God according to our particular genius and also our particular gender. These concrete ways of embodying the relationship with God are what we call spirituality.

There is a feminine way of living the relationship with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and Mary is the paradigm of that feminine genius. She allowed herself to be transformed by the Spirit, responding from the simplicity of her life and from her being a woman, reaching the summit of what every man or woman is called to be. The “feminine genius” that we are looking for appears in Mary and is transmitted in the Church for the good of all humanity. There is a way of reconnecting to God proper to Mary and the woman is more capable than the man to embody it.

Of course, the “spirituality” of Mary was greatly marked by its historical, cultural and religious context, something that we will always have to take into account. Contexts mark our relationship with God. In the case of Mary, it is a relationship of woman, daughter, mother and wife that affects her humanity, her human relationships and her relationship with God. She also learned to be a disciple of Jesus and a sister and friend to the men and women she encountered. Luke testifies that Mary had a particular way of contemplating with the eyes of faith what was happening and reflecting on them in her heart. She will occupy a unique position in the Church of which she is a “model and prototype” in addition to being its loving Mother (cf. Lumen Gentium 53).

There is a feminine genius for living the relationship with God through extending, by the grace of the Spirit, these characteristics of Mary, a spirituality centered on Christ, but very attentive to the action of the Spirit. In our CC and RR, it is said that Mary was docile to the Spirit and that she responds with total availability to her calls (CC. 10 and 13), incarnating the Word so as to give it to the world of which it is the only hope. Every woman is called today to discover and deepen in the Church the relationship with the Spirit that Mary had and to collaborate with Him. Thinking about the specifics of our charism, we must consider the **oblative, spousal and maternal** dimensions. From these dimensions, women follow Jesus and imitate him as **apostolic women**. Each woman is called to cultivate these and

⁹ EO 1,11. General Postulation, Rome, 1987. Letter to Fr. Mouchette. December 2, 1854.

other spiritual traits from her particular experience, and all those called to live the charism can benefit from her experience.

A characteristic of Saint Eugene's spirituality is that it is centered in his heart, in his way of passionately loving Jesus and all that Jesus loved. We can find many expressions in which Eugene tries to describe what is happening within him. Let us remember his strong desire to love more and more, love like Mary and even more, as he expresses it in his prayer to achieve more love.¹⁰ I think it will be easy to discover a continuity between the experience of Saint Eugene, lived as a man, with the particular genius with which women who share our charism live out his spirituality. At the same time, there is a dimension that expands the charism by living it in a feminine way.

In addition to the above, I would like to invite you to discover how women are embodying the **eucharistic dimension**. We know that this is central to the experience of God, that of Saint Eugene and of our charismatic family. In fact, the Eucharist is the center of Eugene's life. He lives it as a Christian man, religious priest and bishop. Women live this eucharistic dimension in a unique way that has a lot to do with **Mary, the eucharistic woman**, and her way of welcoming into her body and into her spirit the Word made flesh. Let's say that it is an oblation experience since one receives Christ to give him to the world, giving oneself totally to God's saving plan.

Our oblation is missionary: we receive grace in order to share it by giving ourselves. It is the oblation of Christ, received so as to take flesh in our flesh and offered in our oblation to give life to the world. Anthropologically, women have a particular disposition to develop this oblation dimension, acceptance and gift. This disposition marks her spiritual life and her human development. Mary, the eucharistic woman, opens the way for us to understand in depth our charismatic eucharistic being and we expect of the feminine genius their contribution in this regard.

Pope Francis has expressions that inspire us when seeking ways to foster the spirituality of Mary: *"She (Mary) is the woman of faith, who lives and walks in faith, and her exceptional pilgrimage of faith represents a point of constant reference for the Church... She allowed herself to be led by the Spirit, on an journey of faith, towards a destiny of service and fruitfulness."* (EG 287) *"She is also the one who carefully preserves «all things, meditating on them in her heart»". (Lk 2,19) Mary knows how to recognize the traces of the Spirit of God in great events and also in those that seem imperceptible. She contemplates the mystery of God in the world, in history and in the daily life of each and everyone. She is the praying and hard-working woman in Nazareth, and she is also our Lady of promptness, the one who leaves her town to help others "without delay" (Lk 1,39).* (EG 288).

How does all this resonate with the women who live our charism? To be Mary in the relationship with God, as a eucharistic and apostolic woman; the spousal, maternal dimension, oblation, etc. How has it manifested itself in concrete experiences?

¹⁰ MY GOD, DOUBLE, TRIPLE, INCREASE MY STRENGTH A HUNDREDFOLD THAT I MAY LOVE YOU, NOT MERELY AS MUCH AS I CAN, THAT IS NOTHING, BUT THAT I LOVE YOU AS MUCH AS DID THE SAINTS, AS MUCH AS YOUR HOLY MOTHER LOVED AND LOVES YOU. MY GOD, THAT IS NOT ENOUGH, AND WHY I SHOULD I NOT LOVE YOU AS MUCH AS YOU LOVE YOURSELF? THAT CANNOT BE, I KNOW, BUT TO DESIRE IT IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE, FOR I FORM IT IN ALL SINCERITY IN MY HEART, WITH ALL MY SOUL. YES, MY GOD, I WOULD LIKE TO LOVE YOU AS MUCH AS YOU LOVE YOURSELF... (ST. EUGENE DE MAZENOD, ORDINATION RETREAT, 1811)

4.2 The feminine genius and the care of the poor and of the earth

In different cultures and societies, the capacity of women to care tenderly for everything and everyone is evident. In their way of relating to the Other and to others, there is a natural disposition to care for and take care of the other, especially where existence is more fragile. This is also expressed in their relationship with creation, in caring for the Earth. A dimension that also has its aesthetic side where the cultivation of beauty and art are one more expression of that care. We believe that this gift is applied in a special way in the mission: calls to care tenderly for the poor and vulnerable.

The Founder had a similar way of relating to the poor: he addressed them with tenderness, making them his favourites. The only thing the Founder wants to do is try to extend the way in which Jesus cared for the poor, the sinners and everyone who was left outside the society or religion of his time. From that merciful love, he gives them what they need so that they recognize their dignity as persons and as children of God. Among many other texts that we are called to extend today, we are inspired in a special way by the so-called Sermon at the Madeleine.¹¹ This way of loving the poor is a characteristic of our charismatic family, as Fr. Vincens (General Secretary) will say in a letter addressed to Fr. Arnaud on February 15, 1860: *“Evangelizare pauperibus misit me. We are meant for the poor; it is among them that we feel at home. We have a special grace to do a bit of good for them.”*¹²

In this sense, Saint Eugene's care for young people is paradigmatic. It is the close relationship with the members of “his” Association of the Youth of Aix, like a father but also like a mother. Some of these young people will become Oblates and will extend that closeness and love of the Founder that they have experienced, making this attitude the proper characteristic of our mission: *“always close to the people”* (C.8).

Although Saint Eugene never founded a female branch of the Oblates, he was always eager to invite other female religious congregations to work for the poor in his diocese as well as to accompany the Oblates in missions abroad. This is another point that requires further study. We can say that Eugene de Mazenod was aware of the need for the feminine genius for evangelization.

There is a feminine way of relating to the poor in the mission and it has to do with Mary. Pope Francis reminds us that *“every time we look at Mary we believe again in the revolutionary nature of tenderness and affection.This dynamic of justice and tenderness, of contemplating and walking towards others, is what makes her an ecclesial model for evangelization”*. *Mary is the one who knows how to transform an animal cave into the home of Jesus, with some poor diapers and a mountain of tenderness. She is the friend who is always attentive so that wine is not lacking in our lives. She is the one with the heart pierced by the sword, who understands all sorrows. As the mother of all, she is a sign of hope for the peoples who are in labor pain until justice emerges. She is the missionary who draws near us to accompany us through life, opening hearts to faith with her maternal affection. Like a true mother, she walks with us, fights with us, and incessantly pours out the closeness of God's love (n.286). “Today we fix our gaze on her, so that she help us announce the message of salvation to all, and so that her new disciples become evangelizing agents (EG 287).*

¹¹Instructions in Provençal given in 1813 in La Madaleine, Aix. Spiritual Writings. Vol. II n. 114. General Postulation, Rome, 1994. (Editado en Asunción Paraguay 1999)

¹²Selected texts related to the O.M.I. Constitutions and Rules, n.43. Rome, 1984

The feminine genius of our charism extends that care that Mary had for Jesus and that she has for the poor. The particular love of Mary for the poor is manifested in what the Virgin Mary said to Saint Juan Diego at Tepeyac: *“Listen to me, my son, my smallest son. Do not let anything frighten you or afflict you, do not let your heart be disturbed; am I not here, I who am your mother?”* The poor have been chosen by Mary to carry her message. Yes, Mary tells the little ones that she is here, close to them and she is their mother, as she was in Cana in Galilee, their mother as Jesus wished her to be from his cross. She is the mother of the new humanity and of the new creation that are born from the cross and that we are all called to care for, taking care of our common home. That maternal love of care and tenderness of Mary for the poor and for all creation is what the women who live our charism are called to embody and extend.

How does this resonate with the women who live our charism? To be Mary, taking care of the poor and of creation, the revolution of tenderness, etc. How has it manifested itself in concrete experiences?

4.3 Caring for the community and family

The woman has her particular way of caring for the family and the community. The community dimension is an essential element of our charism. The Founder dreamed of us as the most united family on earth. He himself shows special care for each Oblate, like a father and like a mother. This love reaches even the candidates that he did not know personally: *“I do not know you personally, but since the love uniting me to my children is essentially one of the supernatural order, it is enough for me to know that our Lord Jesus Christ, our common Master, has accepted your vows, that he has adopted and marked you with the seal that makes us what we are. As a result we are united in the most intimate bonds of charity and I belong to you always as you belong to me.”*¹³ It is a love that each one of us feels today. In a letter addressed to Fr. Mie on June 19, 1825, he writes: *“I am not telling you to love one another; this recommendation would be superfluous. Rather, I tell you, take care of one another and let each one be attentive to the health of all.”* (Oblate Writings vol 6, 183)

In these times we are seeking to be communities open to the young and the poor; we seek a more sincere relationship among ourselves, avoiding individualism; we seek missionary communion among all the members of our charismatic family. The women who live our charism will be able to help us with their specific contribution to make all our communities an evangelical and missionary home for the poor. Once again, we seek to learn to be Mary who cares for and accompanies the growth of Jesus, together with Joseph, in the house of Nazareth. Mary, wife and mother, who tenderly cares for the community of Jesus, the Church and all humanity and the new creation of which she is the mother.

Following our reflection, we can ask ourselves, what does the feminine genius contribute to the **service of authority** in our charismatic family? I intentionally use these words and not the one that is more common nowadays: **leadership**. Jesus did not act like a leader does in our days when he lived with the group of disciples that he himself called and sent. Furthermore, he resists and protests against the manner of leadership of the political, religious and moral authorities of his time. He calls himself Good Shepherd and Door and when he calls himself Master, he corrects the image that the disciples had by saying that we

¹³ Letter to Fr. Baret August 28, 1843, Selected texts related to the O.M.I. Constitutions and Rules, n. 452. Rome, 1984

must imitate him by being servants of one another, washing each other's feet as He did, commissioning us to remember that gesture at the last supper (John 13, 1-17).

Etymologically, the word authority comes from a Latin word *auctoritas* that is opposed to *potestas* or socially accepted power. The verb behind this word means to increase, to promote, to make progress. The one who serves from authority is the one who takes care of making the other grow. The feminine genius can enlighten us to live a more evangelical service of authority that helps us to overcome clerical, authoritarian and elitist ways, a service of authority exercised in a more participatory and diaconal way.

Eugene de Mazenod's way of exercising leadership was highly marked by his time and by his own temperament. However, it is not strange to find some inspiring elements of what we are looking for, especially when he recommends other superiors to be more charitable towards their brothers, to consult their councils, to take responsibility for each other and to take care of their health and everyone's repose. It would be worth studying in more detail.

Let us think of Mary in the house of Nazareth where Jesus remains under her authority and that of Joseph. She helped Jesus grow humanly and religiously, caring for him and respecting his identity and autonomy, even though she did not understand everything. She was the one who, with her confident plea and her attentive look at the needs of others, overcame the resistance of her son in Cana and anticipated his signs. She exercises her authority by following Jesus as a disciple and at the cross, she does not abandon him, like the others, but she remains standing, accompanying and waiting. She is also present in the first steps of the post-Easter Church, confirming the faith. The humble servant of the Lord, always obedient to her Word, knows how to embody an authority that does not need to impose in order to invite everyone to follow her Son.

In this context, we must talk about **our being Church**. Saint Eugene expresses his affective love for the Church and is always attentive to her needs in order to respond by giving over his life. It is enough to read the **Preface**, a Preface that all the members of our charismatic family must translate within our contexts. We urgently need to “read” how the women of our charismatic family translate the Preface.

Mary is the prototype of the Church. Women develop their being Church from that identity with Mary that is proper to them. An identity of a **woman and a mother**, as well as a **wife**. Identity that is nurtured by attentive listening to the Word that becomes flesh and memory for the community of those who follow Jesus. Let us remember Mary united with the primitive community of Jerusalem. She occupies an eminent position in the midst of the group (Acts 1,12-14). Mary, who contemplated all the deeds of Jesus and kept them in her heart; she prays with the community that remembers Jesus by their way of living and praying. She remembers Jesus and his deeds, some of which only she knew, and thus she gathers in unity the Apostles and disciples of the Lord to confirm them in the faith after the resurrection.

Of course, at this early stage, we cannot confuse the service of Mary with any of the ministries we now know. We can ask ourselves about the identity of women in the Church and the way in which the ministries that they would exercise and develop should be shaped, extending that unique ministry of Mary and her style **of remembering and confirming in faith and in unity**. I believe that this Congress can initiate a dialogue within our charismatic family to discover the ministries and services of women that remember and confirm the faith and unity in everything that refers to our charism. Who knows if this could shed new light

for the Church? We know that we must always explore these paths from ecclesial communion and creative fidelity to our tradition.

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis tells us: “*With the Holy Spirit, Mary is always present in the midst of the people. She joined the disciples in praying for the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14) and thus made possible the missionary outburst which took place at Pentecost. She is the Mother of the Church which evangelizes, and without her we could never truly understand the spirit of the new evangelization.*” (EG 284) “*The Lord did not want to leave the Church without this icon of womanhood.*” (EG 285). “*We ask the Mother of the living Gospel to intercede that this invitation to a new phase of evangelization will be accepted by the entire ecclesial community.*” (EG 287). “*We implore her maternal intercession that the Church may become a home for many peoples, a mother for all peoples, and that the way may be opened to the birth of a new world. It is the Risen Christ who tells us, with a power that fills us with confidence and unshakeable hope: ‘Behold, I make all things new.’ (Rev 21:5).*” (EG 288).

How does all this resonate with the women who live our charism? Being Mary in relationship with the community, family, etc.; Being Mary in the service of authority, being Mary in the Church, how has this been manifested in concrete experiences?

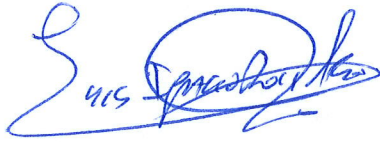
5.- Conclusion:

Being Mary today, a wonderful vocation to which we are all called. In our family, we have the grace of having women who live our charism from their own particular genius. They will make us all discover how to respond to the call to be Mary today. They will be the ones to proclaim this Good News for each one of us, our Church, our world and above all for the poorest and most vulnerable. And they will do it from their own experience and their own response to the inspirations of the Spirit, with the distinctiveness of what each one has received.

It is a time for all of us to sit down at the “charismatic table” to share what we are and what we have. Let us walk together in complementarity, accepting our diversity as Good News, and let us embrace the hope of the full communion of all humanity with God. The Misioneras Oblatas de María Inmaculada have prepared this table for sharing while celebrating the twenty-five years in which they have journeyed to give flesh to the charism. Thanks to their initiative, this process of which we do not know its ending has been launched, but we do know that it is important: discovering and valuing the “feminine genius” of our charism. We thank God for that which, up to now, they and the women who have lived the charism have incarnated. We want to learn from all of them how to be Mary, how to be missionary saints to the most abandoned and how to be the Gospel for all those whose lives intersect with ours.

It will be our family saints who will show us the way. The “next door” saints: that is, all those who live the charism with us and who are consecrated or lay, married or single. One day we will celebrate women saints in our charismatic family, recognized by the Church for having been Mary in their particular context. May our Oblate saints, especially Saint Eugene and the Blessed Oblates and the layman Cándido Castán who lived in this house from where we celebrate this Congress, intercede for us and, from that vision that they enjoy, teach us to be bold to walk together as pilgrims of hope in communion, diverse and complementary, announcing and embodying the Gospel of Jesus.

At Pozuelo de Alarcón, House of the Blessed Oblate Martyrs, on September 16, 2023, in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Misioneras Oblatas de María inmaculada.



Luis Ignacio Rois Alonso, OMI
Superior general.

