

MOTTO FOR 2016

*'We know that God
has appointed us
to be, as it were,
his Mercy to others.'*



Dear Sisters,

In 2015, we began the remote preparation for our 18th Congregational Chapter by careful study, reflection of Pope Francis' *Apostolic Letter to all Consecrated People* and his encyclical *The Joy of the Gospel*. In these documents, 'We were asked to look to the past with gratitude, to live the present with passion and to embrace the future with hope.' I believed that our prayerful reflection, study and coming together for meaningful conversation would be a remote preparation for our Congregational Chapter.

This year has been proclaimed the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, with the motto 'Merciful like the Father'. 'Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy' (MV.1). The Holy Father has opened the Holy Door at Saint Peter's Basilica and each bishop has opened the Holy Door in his diocese on the Feast

of the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. As Francis writes, 'the Holy Door will become the Door of Mercy through which anyone who enters will experience the love of God who consoles, pardons, and instills hope' (MV.3). 'We want to live this Jubilee Year in light of the Lord's words: Merciful like the Father. The Evangelist reminds us of the teaching of Jesus who says, "Be merciful as your Father is merciful" (Lk 6:36). It is a programme of life as demanding as it is rich with joy and peace. Jesus' command is directed to anyone willing to listen to the Word of God' (MV.13).

Our life, as women of the Gospel is one of daily trying to reflect God's presence to the people we meet "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Mt 5:7). We are called to show mercy because mercy has first been shown to us.

'Mercy is an ideal of life and a criterion for the credibility of our faith' (MV.9). The question that we can ask ourselves is - do our words and actions reflect the Gospel message of God's love, mercy and forgiveness?

The mission Jesus received from the Father was that of revealing the mystery of divine love in its fullness. We know and believe that Jesus is the Face of Mercy and His words in the Gospels teach us about love, forgiveness, mercy and compassion.

The mission we receive from Jesus is:

1. To love one another as I have loved you. As we stand with Mary at the foot of the Cross, we are invited to imitate Mary's maternal love for her Son and all those who are His.
2. Each time we say the Our Father, the prayer that Jesus taught us, we say 'and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us'. This year, the question that we need to reflect on is - Am I willing to ask the person that I have hurt, insulted, caused harm to by gossip for forgiveness and am I willing to forgive those who have hurt, insulted or caused me harm by gossip? This condition is a prerequisite as I seek forgiveness of my sins. For each of us that will mean something different, perhaps showing compassion in a difficult situation, reaching out to another, taking time to be with another or any corporate or spiritual work of mercy.
3. And Jesus reminds us that 'whatever you did to the least of my brethren, you did to me' (Matt 25:31 - 46).

'As the Father loves, so do his children. Just as he is merciful, so we are called to be merciful to each other' (MV.9). Do our lives reflect God's mercy?

Pope Francis invites each of us to celebrate this Holy Year; therefore it seems appropriate that we ponder the document *Misericordiae Vultus* as we continue our preparation for the 18th Congregational Chapter. In Mary's Conferences, our Foundress instructs us 'that the Mercy of God must be a constant subject of our meditation' (MC, C13, p133).

I invite you to enter the Holy Door of your diocese to experience the love of God who consoles, pardons, and instills hope, to participate fully in the diocesan activities and to reflect on Mary Potter's words written in 1889, on the death of Mother Xavier - '*We know that God has appointed us to be, as it were, his Mercy to others.*'

Lovingly in the Maternal Heart of Mary,

Carol Pacini

For Congregational Leadership

1st January 2016

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

