



2014 CONGREGATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF CONTEMPLATIVE SISTERS

QUITO, ECUADOR

IMPELLED BY GOD'S LOVE

“The great mystery of Christianity is the invisibility of God in the Universe.”

Teilhard de Chardin

We, Contemplative Sisters from various countries throughout the world, gathered in Quito, Ecuador from 8-21 August 2014 for our Congregational Assembly of Contemplative Sisters (CACs). We were joined by our Congregational Leadership Team, Province Leaders and, for the first time, our lay mission partners.

Energized by the Spirit, we responded to Sr. Brigid Lawlor’s invitation to “create a new ‘now’ and plan with creativity the future of our contemplative life in our congregation.”

We experience a great desire from within to live a deep encounter with God through lives transformed by silence, solitude, communal discernment and by joyfully living all of the other Essential Elements. We give thanks to God for the missionary spirit of our sisters who have responded to the call to go *Ad Gentes* and to be the presence of Christ through the witness of their contemplative lives.

The words of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, resonate within our hearts:

“Build community life...it is the Holy Spirit who is in the midst of the community. Always contemplate, always with Jesus...and in community life, always with a big heart. Let things go, do not brag, be patient, smile from the heart. A sign of this is joy, which is born from true contemplation and from the beauty of community life.”

Address at Basilica of St. Clare in Assisi, October 4, 2013

We are deeply aware that the mystic is one who experiences God in all things and all things in God. She is a free person.

We are challenged to risk together for mission and we commit ourselves to:

- Deepen our thirst for the absolute primacy of God, recognized in creation ... Icon of the face of God;
- Renew ourselves, during this time of reunification, in our sources and drink from the rich spirituality of Saint John Eudes, Saint Mary Euphrasia and Blessed Maria Droste;
- Value our contemplative identity, the time for prayer, our liturgical and community life;

- Attend with care to community life:
 - Nurture a permanent attitude of pardon and reconciliation in our communities;
 - Form ourselves in communal discernment to assist us in creating a balanced life of prayer, work, study and leisure;
 - Regularly evaluate all aspects of our contemplative life in light of our Essential Elements, and justice and peace;
- Be a welcoming community to those who come to share prayer with us, while also respecting the requirements of enclosure;
- Strengthen and transform relationships and collaboration for mission among contemplative sisters, apostolic sisters, and our lay mission partners;
- Implement promotion of vocation for mission and holistic formation for all sisters and lay mission partners, working in partnership with our apostolic sisters and responsibly utilizing various means of communication.

“If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation.”

Pope Benedict XVI

Eco-spirituality challenges us to:

- Continue to deepen our understanding of creation spirituality, based on the mystery of the Trinity and our Good Shepherd spirituality;
- Grow in our awareness that we are the “container” of the divinity of God, and that our apostolic incarnational prayer is interconnected with every element of the Universe;
- Deepen the gift of astonishment and admiration for the mystery and beauty of God’s creation;
- Educate ourselves and others about respect for our Earth and the sustainable use of human and material resources:
 - Reduce
 - Re-use
 - Recycle
 - Renew

Promotion of Justice and Peace challenges us to:

- Increase our awareness of global realities and take concrete action in solidarity with our sisters, brothers, and all creation;
- Value dialogue, especially with those of other religions, as key to justice;
- Be respectful and reconciling in every encounter, careful in our words that we do not judge or label anyone;
- Passionately defend the beauty of God’s creation;
- Be open daily to the call to renewal and transformation in Christ.

Recommendations:

- That we continue to implement the Appreciative Process and Sacred Space;
- That, at Province Chapters, Assemblies and meetings, we make space for reflection, discussion and sharing with our apostolic sisters on areas of importance to the contemplative way of life;
- That we ensure adequate formation in order to prepare our newer sisters for the future by utilizing the 2014 Congregational Formation Guidelines;
- That for the sisters in temporary vows, formation programs be provided that focus specifically on the contemplative life;
- That the Contemplative Congregational Leadership Team continue to provide on-going formation sessions;
- That we deepen our understanding of the two lifestyles and work toward greater mutuality.

Conclusion:

A deep sense of gratitude wells up within us...gratitude for our call to live this contemplative life from our vow of zeal. Our awareness of the primacy of God creates a desire to give our absolute best in witness to the gospel. We are drawn to the Heart of the Trinity and a deep desire to remain there. At the same time, we experience the pain and suffering of the world, and we know that we too share in the sinfulness and violence of the world. Daily, we are called to conversion and transformation in Christ. Impelled by God's love for all creation, and in union with the heart of Mary, we are moved to reach out and touch the face of God in suffering creation. Knowing that we are called to experience God in all things and all things in God, we offer the witness of our contemplative lives. We offer the power of our apostolic incarnational prayer. We offer a permanent attitude of reconciliation.

Then they will risk,
And wonder at their daring
Run and marvel at their speed
Build and stand in awe at the beauty of their building.

Charles Péguy, "The Heart of the Matter"

21st August 2014