



Closing mass – words of General Superior Sr Veronica Fuhrmann CJ

Dear companions in the Lord - gathered here in Nemi and all over the world!

Again and again the Gospels tell of Jesus gathering his disciples around him, in lonely places, on the mountain, to strengthen them, to teach them, to empower them. For the disciples, these are moments lifted out of everyday life, experiences of intimate communion with Jesus and communion with one another; experiences that imprint themselves on the soul and deepens their lives. At the end of Matthew's Gospel, we have reached the climax of Jesus' story with his disciples. The Risen Lord calls them together again, empowers them and missions them. They are sent out to bring the message of salvation to the people, to be witnesses to God's work of redemption which they have deeply experienced themselves.

Being gathered around Jesus – being missioned by Jesus

Being gathered around Jesus is the response of our whole human being, with all that belongs to our human condition, from the devotion and surrender of prostrating oneself up to the very human doubt in the face of the intangibility of the One who reveals Himself as the Risen Lord. It is the response to a call that has been given, it is not an appointment among friends out of human initiative in the exclusivity of common inclinations, interests and goals.

Being sent by Jesus is not the decision of an individual or a group to shape one's own life according to one's own or a group's ideas; it is also not the human willingness and initiative to commit oneself to the cause of God. Mission lives from the innermost connection with Jesus, from listening to Him anew each time, from making oneself available and allowing oneself to be disposed of - totally available like the Virgin Mary, whose feast we celebrate today. It is about the dialectic of selfless total giving to Jesus coupled with the highest human commitment in response to the mission received.

Gathered around Jesus – being missioned

It is this inner dynamic of two seemingly opposing movements of coming together around Jesus and coming apart in being sent that is the deepest essence of our vocation as Mary Ward's Companions. Neither aspect is sufficient unto itself.

Our General Congregation - the whole process over two years with the culmination of the presence meeting here in Nemi is also in this inner dynamic. We have gathered around Jesus, coming from all corners of the earth, to listen to God's voice, to His call for our congregation in our suffering and wounded world, the call and the signs in which He reveals Himself. We have gathered to listen to each other with open minds and hearts, to perceive how God's Spirit speaks from each one, in the richness and also the challenge of our diversity, a diversity held together by a deep union of minds and hearts in Jesus.

Our vertical and horizontal generative listening and speaking has not primarily led us to print-ready answers and guidelines that we can subsequently implement uniformly all around the world in the sense of a To Do list. Certainly we have identified and formulated burning issues in our Body, such as a deeper rootedness and transformation in our spirituality and charism,

our process of Becoming One with the IBVM, our listening and answering to the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth, the call to synodality in all aspects of our life and mission, the commitment to safeguarding at all levels. We have not drafted an action plan in the classical sense. It is about refocusing our life and mission and measuring it in the face of the needs of our time.

We will have to continue to discern more and more deeply and discover what the implementation of God's calls means concretely in time and space. It remains a journey that we walk together as *Companios* in the Lord, supporting and challenging each other. It remains a journey in the union of the one call that brought us together, in the gaze that is focused on Jesus.

Gathered around Jesus – that's what we were here in Nemi, having been called with all our strengths and weaknesses, having opened ourselves to Him, having been newly empowered and now we are missioned back to our provinces.

What is our specific mission as members of the GC going back tomorrow?

I would like to mention three aspects – you could also call it a triple homework: It is about

- Witnessing and sharing
- Involving
- Implementing

There is a call of **witnessing and sharing** our lived experience that God's Spirit is alive among us and works through us, of witnessing and sharing the experience of union of minds and hearts, embracing our diversity and vulnerability. The experience of God's presence in each sister makes us not only grateful, but also deeply reverent and humble and lays the foundation for a reverent and appreciative way of dealing with each other and for God to work through us for the people entrusted to us.

There is the call of **involving** all the sisters and the wider Mary Ward Family in what we have experienced here! It's not only about telling and passing on information. It is about seeking creative ways to pass on the great joys, concerns and intentions of our GC in such a way that hearts begin to burn anew and positive energy is released for the common journey into the future.

There is a call of **implementing** the above mentioned spiritual and apostolic preferences and orientations in our respective provinces all around the world, with the necessary diversity according to time, place, people and circumstances. The results of our discernment here in Nemi must lead to further discernment processes in the provinces, to new focusing and very concrete steps of implementation in our lives and ministries.

At the end of this GC, there is no full stop. There is, as Jane pointed out in the preparation process, a comma. Continuing to write after the comma is not just the business of those gathered here in Nemi. All of us, every single member all over the world, is responsible for shaping our present and co-creating the future in the light of God's calls we have perceived. May God help us all to contribute as best we can, to the greater glory of His name.

Jesus say Amen.