



THE INTERNATIONAL SESSION OF *HOLY FAMILY* BURSARS

Rome, 12 - 21 June 2019

Dear Sisters,

Welcome to this session which is the first time that some of you have taken part in this type of meeting. This morning, when the objectives of the session were presented to you, you will have realised the importance of this meeting not only for the personal help you will receive to fulfil your role well but also for raising your awareness of the responsibility you have taken on for the administration of the goods of the Institute.

The first thing we must be clear about, whether we are bursars or not, is that our goods/resources are at the service of the Mission carried out in line with our Charism in a great variety of ways of being present to others and a great diversity of apostolic commitments. When we say “goods” we are thinking not only of economic resources but also of human resources. The latter are the most important goods when it comes to carrying out our *Holy Family* Mission. All resources must be directed towards the fulfilment of our “reason for being” both now and in the future.

It will be very difficult to respond to our Mission if we do not share a vision, a common objective and the resources necessary for carrying it out. It is because of the Mission which we have in today’s world that we cannot allow ourselves the luxury of being inefficient when we administer the human and material resources at our disposal since they are limited. We must realise that absolutely all the decisions which the Leadership Teams of the Institute take always have financial implications.

We must trust in Providence but this does not mean being unconcerned since God will give us everything we need to carry out the Mission. It means rather having the certainty that God has already given us the necessary resources and the necessary intelligence to administer them in the service of the Mission.¹

The Founder invites us to be “*poor, hard-working and faithful like St Joseph.*”² Work, as well as being a means of earning our living, helps us to become mature and personally fulfilled and, in collaboration and solidarity with others, we make the world a better place.

He tells us that our goods are to be considered as the patrimony of the poor and this is also stated in our Constitutions.³ If what we have belongs to them, we must be accountable to them for our

¹ Fernando Torres, CMF

² GR 1851 - Preface

administration, and every form of wastefulness or bad management is infidelity or injustice towards the poor.

When we speak about the use and administration of the resources of the Institute, we have to take into account not only the poor but creation as well. Nature is a common good for future generations also. We are speaking here of “global commons”⁴ and our responsibility for the care and future of the poor and of the planet.

We must become aware, not only on an ideological level but also on a practical and tangible level that we live on a planet that has limited resources where our ever-increasing consumerism and accumulation of goods come into conflict with the needs of the poor and the cry of the Earth. For years now, we have been talking about interconnection and interdependence.

How my style of life, which I chose freely and which has is supported by the community, changed? This is not just external asceticism. It is something more radical – it is a refusal to turn reality into an object simply to be used and controlled.⁵

Pope Francis and other present-day religious leaders invite us to become aware of the consequences of the decisions we make regarding our lifestyle. “A commitment this lofty cannot be sustained by doctrine alone, without a spirituality capable of inspiring us, without an interior impulse which encourages, motivates, nourishes and gives meaning to our individual and community activity.”⁶

“In the 21st century, when dealing with growing socio-environmental conflicts, religious communities are called to re-read their sacred texts and theological sources in order to find inspiration and direction for conscientising their followers with regard to their ecological responsibility and for promoting transformative action.”⁷

When we speak of a simple style of life, each one understands it and lives it very differently. But it has to be in keeping with our vow of poverty and the guidelines of the Institute. We cannot ignore the extent to which the climate in which we live (materialism, consumerism, “worldliness”, satisfying our desires rather than our needs etc.) influences our options. “Purchasing is always a moral act”.⁸ We are responsible for what we consume and must question ourselves about what we buy, from whom we buy and who gains by it.

Have we cut down on our consumer habits, simplified our lives, limited our material desires and used only what we need?

³ Constitutions, Arts. 79 and 100

⁴ LS 23; 49; 156; 174

⁵ LS 11

⁶ LS 216

⁷ Jaime Tatai citing the Spanish edition of Wolf Aaron, *The Spirit of Dialogue*

⁸ Benedict XVI, CiV, 66

It is urgent that we live a kind of asceticism where austerity, detachment and a simple lifestyle are signs of an integrated life. These traditional practices are very relevant in the light of an over-exploited planet with finite resources and a growing socio-economic inequality. In the struggle against consumerism, “dumping”, and a throw-away culture we can, by our lifestyle option, encourage the alternative of moderation, being satisfied with what we have, not accumulating and solidarity etc. This is a sign of prophetic hope for humanity and the planet.

In *Laudato sí*, Pope Francis calls us to an “ecological conversion”. In our time, does it not make sense to include nature in the list of the victims of human sin?⁹

The breakdown in relationships caused by sin would not then be limited to the relationship of God with others but would include future generations and all the species and ecosystems that we are degrading and destroying, thus increasing pain and violence.¹⁰

World leaders have the responsibility of making global decisions to solve the problem but each one of us, (and many others), is implicated because we have an unsustainable lifestyle which puts at risk not only the life of the planet but the human species.

We know what we have to do but we find it hard to do it and take the only solution possible – shared austerity. We can either make this choice freely now or we will have no alternative within a few years.

Of course, making decisions that are consistent with what the poor and the planet are experiencing today is not the exclusive responsibility of bursars but it is part of your role to help others to be aware of all this and to mobilise the whole institute in this direction.

We are all called to live all aspects of our life – including finance – in an integrated way. Finding the appropriate way of relating to God’s gifts and using them can be the prophetic sign today which reveals God’s dream for fullness of life for the whole of Creation.

Ana María

⁹ LS 66

¹⁰ LA 66 The Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew I – “Et Dieu vit que cela était bon”, 2015.