

OPENING REMARKS

XXIII GENERAL CHAPTER

Good morning, good afternoon, bonjour and good evening! Welcome to this celebration of the opening of our 23rd General Chapter.

The Chapter is a very important event for us Siervas de San Jose because it is where we come together to look at our present and project our future. Having this perspective and having in mind our congregational project, which invites us to keep on dreaming, we believe that we are not alone, and for this reason, we have invited to this opening ceremony those who walk with us in various ways in our journey as a Congregation. With us today are representatives of the Lay Josephines in the world, among them are the members of the International Coordinating Team: Elena Manquemilla from Chile, general coordinator, Flor de María Quijano from Peru, Elizabeth Carrasco from Bolivia, Gregory Valdez from Cuba and Concepcion Santacruz from the Philippines. We also have with us representatives of our projects in the different countries, two young people from each country, Rafa Veiga from Taller de Solidaridad, two Hijas de San Jose: Sr. Mariela Carrera, superior general, and Sr. Benita de la Cuerda, vicar general, and representatives of the family of Mo. Bonifacia: Alfonso Caro Picón and Luis Juste Picón, and of Fr. Butinyà: Julia Butinyà. Also with us is Miriam Subirana, coach, lecturer, writer, artist and trainer in Appreciative Inquiry and meditation. As our consultant for this chapter, she will accompany us in some of its phases.

Thanks to all of you for coming to celebrate with us this significant event in our congregational life. Your presence reminds us that we are not alone in our following of Jesus in Nazareth. We are one family and moments like this strengthen our bonds. We ask you to continue accompanying and inspiring us, in a special way, until the last phase of the Chapter in April 2023. It is an important time for us, and we want to live it with you, to receive your encouragement, your hope and commitment. Thank you for being there.

For those who have doubts about what a general chapter is, according to our Constitutions, "it is a collegial organ of government, representative of the entire Congregation, which makes effective the participation and co-responsibility of all members in the governance of the same. It is the highest authority of the Congregation" (C. 107) and is held every six years.

The theme we have chosen for this chapter is: *"Reimagining spaces for the Charism, in synodality, committed to the emerging reality"*. One of the important lines of action that we have implemented during this six-year period has been the re-reading of the Charism, a task still unfinished. We believe that in this chapter a great challenge is precisely to continue this process of re-reading so that the Charism may

continue to spring forth again with full vitality in the different contexts and emerging realities where we are. It is a process that involves reimagining new spaces for the Charism. Reimagining is not simply an act of fantasy, but an exercise in creativity, innovation, audacity and commitment, in fidelity to the gift of the Spirit that we have received through Fr. Butinyà and Mo. Bonifacia. It requires openness to new possibilities, learning something new as well as other ways of doing things. It requires audacity to think outside the box of "it has always been done this way". To reimagine is also to be able to project the experience of the charism into the future with hope. It is to this that all of us Siervas de San Jose want to commit ourselves, offering our concrete response but as part of the Josephine Family, because only in this way will we make it possible for the charism to uphold its prophetic and transforming force today.

To symbolize all this, we have chosen a logo for the Chapter that I would like to explain with the desire that we make it our own and give it meaning.

"In the first place, there is a blue circle, which means dynamism, symbol of a CHARISM in movement, a CHARISM that never stops or forgets to drink from its fountain, symbolized in that explosion of transparent water that flows from a myriad of colors that fill with life and strength in the midst of an emerging reality. An explosion of life so necessary today to take a leading role in our society, and that represents the plurality and the multitude of new presences and commitments, typical of the 21st century, to which our charism is open.

Secondly, the circle focuses on a path that symbolizes looking at the current world to reimagine spaces towards the future without forgetting neither the past nor the present, so that the CHARISM continues to fascinate, attract and inspire all the people who get to know it from a committed and courageous attitude."

Thanks to Marina Frias, directress of the Colegio de Nuestra Señora del Pilar in Malaga (Spain), who designed it.

The theme of the chapter seeks to express the various approaches from which we will live this event. The first is synodality, a term that has become famous lately since the Church began its synodal process in October last year, a process that will end with the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2023. Most of us who are here are probably participating in this synodal journey in our respective local churches.

Synodality is a concept that is at the heart of our commitment in religious life, which consists in walking and living together our vocation to follow Jesus from the charism; therefore, experiencing that the whole Church wants to give life to what synodality means as a constitutive dimension of the Church, makes us happy and confirms us in our way of understanding relationships, of organizing ourselves and of building community. In fact, synodality is at the core of the Organic model we have in the

congregation in which circularity, participation and co-responsibility are an essential part of its dynamism and richness.

The last two General Chapters, that of 2011 and that of 2017, were celebrated in a synodal style without having used the term, but they had the same horizon because we tried to walk together, listen to all the voices and seek together where we wanted to go. However, we are aware that we still have much to learn about synodality and, undoubtedly, the process that we are living as a Church in all corners of the planet will help us to promote our practices, to deepen the pedagogy and the inclusive and circular horizon that the Organic model offers us and to keep us in tune with the synodal proposal that the great community of believers in Jesus, which is the Church, wants to live and from which it wants to define herself.

We want this Chapter to be nourished by synodality, that is, that we walk together as a congregation, in the same direction, at the service of the mission. As the synodal process does not exclude anyone, but rather includes everyone, all the sisters will participate in the chapter in a dynamic of reciprocal listening, in which we all have something to contribute and receive, something to learn. In some phases of the chapter, we will also count on some of you, so that we can listen together with the Church to the cry of the world, of humanity and of creation, and in them listen to the Spirit, to what God wants to tell us and to what he wants to invite us today. We hope that through this meeting with you, as we are doing today, we will strengthen the synergy that exists within the Josephine Family.

We also want to live this chapter with an appreciative approach. We believe in the transformative power of looking at life with positivity and we know that everything moves forward and changes in a much more meaningful and effective way when the strengths of one person or group meet the strengths of another, and how little is built when we live from our shortcomings or weaknesses. In a positive approach, one person's joy, hope, trust and passion connect with the joy, hope, confidence and passion of the other because positive energy and transformative dynamism are released when we bring together the things that give life to any human system or group. That is what we are invited to live in this capitular time.

I would like the Congregation and the entire Josephine Family to be, day by day, a strong and dynamic community, open and committed, capable of creating communion and providing meaning from the values of Nazareth in the midst of our vulnerable and wounded world. From there, we can contribute our grain of sand to create a better world but also a place where we can grow and develop as believers and committed people, from a mature and deep faith that sustains our journey and our dialogue with the world.

We thank the Lord for this moment of grace that he is offering to the Congregation and, through it, to the entire Josephine Family, because the fruits of this journey

that we are now beginning will have an impact on the Family as a whole and on the people around us. May Fr. Butinyà and Mo. Bonifacia continue to encourage us in our journey and strengthen our commitment to the working poor world, especially with women, and that, with honesty, co-responsibility and audacity, promote the process we are starting. And may Jesus, Mary and Joseph inspire us in our dream for and our commitment to a better world.

With confidence in the Holy Spirit who will accompany us on this chapter journey, I declare this 23rd General Chapter open.

Before concluding, I would like to thank the group of sisters who have prepared and made this celebration possible today. Thank you very much, Poche, Esther, Maria Bernadette, Josephine and Carmen!

And to all of you, thank you so much. We will now continue with the celebration.

Lillian Olávere Ocenar
General Coordinator
April 23, 2022