

ASSOCIATION OF THE MIRACULOUS MEDAL

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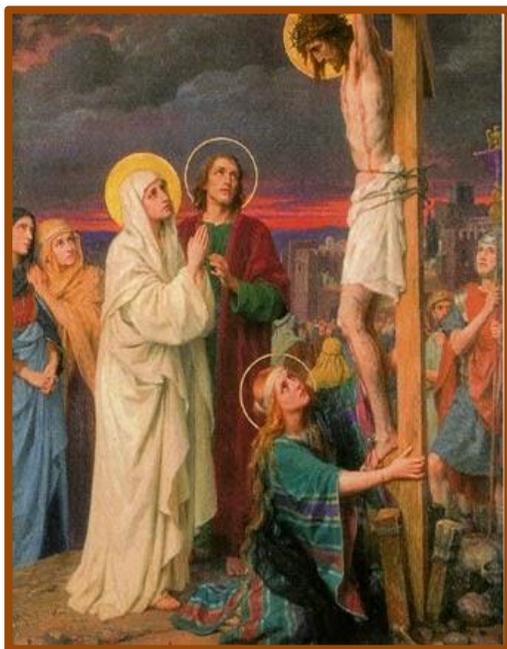
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Bulletín N° 56

THE STEADY PRESENCE OF MARY

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The Gospel of John speaks of only two moments when the life of Jesus intersects with that of his Mother: the wedding feast at Cana (cf. John 2:1-12) and the account we have just read, where Mary stands beneath the cross (cf. John 19:25-27).



The first thing John mentions is that Mary "stands near the cross of Jesus", close to her Son. She stood there, at the foot of the cross, with unwavering conviction, fearless and immovable. This is the main way that *Mary shows herself*- she stands near those who suffer, those from whom the world flees, including those who have been put on trial, condemned by all, deported. Nor is it that they are simply oppressed or exploited; they are completely "outside the system", on the very fringes of society. The Mother also stands close by them, steadfast beneath their cross of incomprehension and suffering.

Mary also *shows us* how to "stand near" these situations; it demands more than simply passing by or making a quick visit, engaging in a kind of "tourism of solidarity". Rather, it means that those in painful situations



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should feel us standing firmly at their side and on their side. All those discarded by society can experience the Mother who remains discreetly near them, for in their sufferings she sees the open wounds of her Son Jesus. She learned this at the foot of the cross. We too are called to "touch" the sufferings of others. Let us go out to meet our people, to console them and accompany them. Let us not be afraid to experience the power of tenderness, to get involved and let our lives become complicated for the sake of others. Like Mary, let us remain steadfast, our hearts at peace in God. Let us be ever ready to lift up the fallen.

Jesus asks Mary to receive the beloved disciple as her son. Mary trusts Jesus and receives his disciple, for the relationships that heal us and free us are those that open us to encounter and fraternity with others, in whom we find God himself. At those times, Mary and the disciples of these lands invite us to "receive" our brothers and sisters, to care for them, in a spirit of universal fraternity .

Mary also *shows herself* as the woman who is willing to *be* received, who humbly lets herself become part of the disciple's world. Now, as an obedient disciple, she is willing to accept, to go along with, the pace of someone younger than herself. Harmony is always difficult when we are different, when our differences of age, life experiences and circumstances lead us to feel, think and act in ways that, at first sight, seem opposed. When, in faith, we listen to the command to receive and be received, it becomes possible to build unity in diversity, for differences neither restrain nor divide us, but allow us to look more deeply and to see others in their most profound dignity, as sons and daughters of the same Father (cf. Exhort. ap. *Evangelii gaudium*, 228).

From the foot of the cross, Mary invites us to rejoice that we have been received as her sons and daughters, even as her Son Jesus invites us to receive her into our own homes and to make her a part of our lives. Mary wants to give us her courage, so that we too can remain steadfast, and her humility, so that, like her, we can adapt to whatever life brings.



May all people know that we are willing to show preference to the poor, to raise up those who have fallen, and to receive others just as they come, just as they are.

(Taken from the September 24, 2018 homily of Pope Francis)

POST-SYNODAL APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION CHRISTUS VIVIT – CHRIST IS ALIVE



The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Christus Vivit - Christ is Alive*, was written by Pope Francis after the October Synod on Youth. This document was published on April 2, 2019.

The original text was written in Spanish and the whole document is written in the form of a letter that is addressed to young men and women, the people to whom these reflections are primarily intended. *Christ is alive! He is our Hope! ...* those are the opening words of this Apostolic Exhortation. The fact that the Pope has signed this document outside Rome is significant. This document was signed in Loreto (Italy), at the Shrine of the Holy House which had previously been located in Nazareth ... and was signed on the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord. With that gesture, it is clear that the Pope wanted to offer this document to the Virgin. The Exhortation is composed of nine chapters, two hundred ninety-nine paragraphs and in writing this document the Pope allowed himself *to be inspired by the wealth of reflections and conversations that emerged from last year's Synod.*

Pope Francis stated: *Christ is our hope, and in a wonderful way he brings youth to our world, and everything he touches becomes young, new, full of*



life. The very first words, then, that I would like to say to every young Christian are these: Christ is alive and he wants you to be alive!

The document as a whole is very enriching and here we will highlight some elements found in chapter seven which is dedicated to youth ministry.

In that chapter the Pope explains that youth ministry has been assaulted by social and cultural changes and that *young people frequently fail to find in our usual programs a response to their concerns, their needs, their problems and issues* (#202). He refers to young men and women as *agents of youth ministry ... certainly they need to be helped and guided, but at the same time left free to develop new approaches, with creativity and a certain audacity* (#203). The Pope goes on to say: *I am more concerned with helping young people to use their insight, ingenuity and knowledge to address the issues and concerns of other young people in their own language* (#203).

The Pope highlights certain specific elements of youth ministry that he views as most necessary: *youth ministry needs to become more flexible: inviting young people to events or occasions that provide an opportunity not only for learning, but also for conversing, celebrating, singing, listening to real stories and experiencing a shared encounter with the living God* (#204).

The Pope's desires

The exhortation concludes with a statement of Pope Francis' desire: *Dear young people, my joyful hope is to see you keep running the race before you, outstripping all those who are slow or fearful. Keep running, "attracted by the face of Christ, whom we love so much, whom we adore in the Holy Eucharist and acknowledge in the flesh of our suffering brothers and sisters. May the Holy Spirit urge you on as you run this race. The Church needs your momentum, your intuitions, your faith. We need them! And when you arrive where we have not yet reached, have the patience to wait for us"* (#299).

We conclude with the following questions:



Have we read the Apostolic Exhortation: *Christus Vivit - Christ is Alive*?
 Have we begun to reflect upon the manner in which we, as a group, can contribute to the enhancement of young ministry?
 Are we doing what we should do in this area of youth ministry or are we moving slowly and fearfully?

SAINT LOUISE DE MARILLAC: FORMATOR OF LAITY

On May 9th, we celebrated the feast of Saint Louise de Marillac. Let us briefly reflect on her as the formator of the laity.



The indispensable role of the laity in the Church has become more and more clear. Indeed, the apostolate of evangelization and charity require the presence and the commitment of the laity. The vocation of the laity is that of being apostles who are sent forth to be witnesses to the gospel. The laity participate in the mission of

Jesus who sends them forth to proclaim the gospel to all people. The starting point is the calling that Jesus extended to those persons called to be his disciples: *Come and follow me* (Mark 10:21). Jesus then commanded them to make all people his disciples: *Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations* (Matthew 28:19). The V General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops referred to and developed this vocation to be missionary disciples of Jesus Christ.

Louise received an excellent formation, one that enabled her to form others. In 1629 Louise was sent forth on a mission. She began to visit the Confraternities of Charity and her ministry grew. She was glad to be able to share her knowledge, her criteria and her convictions.



She founded the first Confraternities in Paris. What did she do? First, she engaged in a process of motivating women of the noble class so that they would make a commitment. She, then, motivated the various pastors who had to allow the Confraternity to be established in their parish and the pastor also had to assist the women in locating those parishioners who were poor and/or infirm.

We should also note here Louise's concern for the education of children, especially girls. She created schools that were dependent on the members of the Confraternities. Indeed, the education of children became a privileged form of evangelization.

Louise engaged in the ministry of formation through individual and group accompaniment, through retreats and spiritual direction.

We also note that her concern for formation led her, together with Vincent de Paul, to establish the Company of the Daughters of Charity.

What leads us to view Louise as the formator of the Laity?

Fidelity to the origins of Christianity.

During the first centuries of the Christian era, the followers of Jesus Christ were laymen and women who had been formed by the apostles or by others who collaborated with the apostles.

Fidelity to the Church's teaching.

The Second Vatican Council's decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*) is often referred to as the Magna Carta of lay ministry. The six chapters of this decree outline themes that are most important with regard to lay formation today.

After the 1987 Synod, which dealt with the theme of the vocation and the mission of the laity in the church and in the world, Pope John Paul II published a post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*, which further developed the teaching of the Council. Pope Benedict and Francis



have continued to provide us with profound reflections on this same theme.

Fidelity to the teachings of our superiors generals

Recent superior generals have shared with us their reflections on this theme (especially Father Robert Maloney [1992-2004]). They call us (members of the Congregation of the Mission and the Company of the Daughters of Charity) to collaborate in the formation of lay Vincentian. They have sensitized us and motivated us to collaborate together in this ministry. They have reminded us that this ministry of lay formation is a question of being faithful to the charism of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac. In one of his articles, Father Maloney spoke about ten characteristics of Vincentian formators:

- ✓ Deeply rooted in the person of Jesus Christ
- ✓ Fully immersed in the Vincentian Charism
- ✓ In contact with the world of the poor
- ✓ Capable of being a guide on the spiritual journey
- ✓ A good listener
- ✓ A good communicator: skilled in using contemporary means for engaging others in the formation process
- ✓ Knowledgeable about the social teaching of the Church
- ✓ Capable of relating and working as a member of a team and of cooperating with others as a team member
- ✓ In touch with the various groups in our Vincentian Family
- ✓ Truly missionary

What commitment can we make so that as Vincentians we are better formed and at the same time become the formators of other?





LIFE OF THE ASSOCIATION AROUND THE WORLD

COLOMBIA



Sister Ladis Viaña, Provincial Advisor in Bogota, Colombia informed us about the VI Provincial Assembly of the Association that took place from May 26 to 28, 2019. This gathering was characterized by enthusiastic and joyful participation and firm commitment. The central themes were: the Marian tradition in the Associations and the various Vincentian ministries; Mary, who said "yes"!

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BRAZIL



Orlanda Rodríguez Alves, National President of the Association in Brazil provided us with the chronicle of the Fifth National Assembly which was held from May 14 to 26, 2019. The theme for their reflection was: Master, where do you live? (their motto was: together with Mary we find Jesus). The chronicle reflects the richness of their dialogue and the joy that they experienced in being together. They also highlighted the commitment of the group.

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PANAMA

Sister Cilia Varijia Cerrato, National Advisor informed us about the ministry of the members, that is, they visited men and women who were imprisoned for various reasons. Sisters also sent us photographs of their recent National Assembly.



PORTUGAL

The members send us their April 2019 Bulletin which contains interesting articles that are intended to inform and to form the members of this group.

PERU

The members informed us that they will hold their XIX National Assembly from August 10-11, 2019. They ask us to accompany them with our prayers.

*Translated:
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