

Spiritual Message – February 2016  
Openness to the Realities of the World

Since the community gathering on October 3rd, we have continued our commitment to *open doors to the future*. You will recall that one of the keys we chose to help us live this is *openness to the realities of the world*.

Let us approach the realities of the world, not from economic and political systems or abstract questions, but by drawing close to people in our society who are suffering the most. In particular, let us be open to the realities in the lives of women, of migrants, of people in search of meaning, and let us hear their cries. Let us look to Jesus to show us the way to be present to them as we are challenged by our SNJM writings.

### The cry of women

Numerous women aspire to find their dignity and their real place in the world and in the Church. Let us hear the cry of women who are exploited, trafficked, mistreated in body and spirit; the cry of divorced women left on their own; and the cry of marginalized women prevented from exercising their leadership and living as women, equal to men.



Two thousand years ago, Jesus encountered women who were bowed down. “Do not weep,” Jesus told the widow of Nain (Luke 7: 13) who was bowed down by grief. He laid his hands upon the bent sick woman and immediately she straightened up (Luke 13: 10-13). Jesus looked at these women with benevolence and spoke words of healing. As followers of Jesus, we are invited to recognize the women in our milieus and our societies who are bowed down, women who want to be able to stand tall and straight, and we are invited to offer them liberating words.

The call of the 2001 Chapter Acts to be *Women of the Word* is vibrant. “Faced with situations of injustice, violence and exclusion, we will seek the courage, in the Names of Jesus and Mary, to denounce in a nonviolent way all that is contrary to basic human rights, to the respect and dignity of the human person...; to proclaim the good news of a life that moves toward liberation...; to use our influence by taking corporate stands....” (p. 4)

### The cry of refugees



Presently, sixty million refugees, women, men and children, are being uprooted and forced to flee their countries. They are crying injustice and, as victims of poverty, violence and war, they are setting out on a journey to a welcoming land. Will we open our doors? Will we welcome their culture?

Let us enter into the great chain of solidarity and welcome of the various groups preparing a place for them here among us. In his exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis challenges us: “If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living... without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life.” (No. 49)

Let us think about Jesus. At the time of the multiplication of the bread, he was moved with pity for the crowd because they were like sheep without a shepherd.... He told the disciples who were overwhelmed by what was happening, “You yourselves give them something to eat.” (Mark 6:37)

We also hear this call in the 2011 Chapter Acts, a call to “partner with immigrants, refugees and indigenous peoples to resist racism, advocate for human rights, and create welcoming communities.” (pp. 8-9)

### **The cry of people in search of meaning**

Many people no longer feel comfortable in a world in which all too often what is good, beautiful, or noble is not valued. What is religious has lost its credibility among our contemporaries, creating a deep sense of spiritual emptiness, as Guillaume Tremblay expresses so well in his documentary “*The Fortunate Shipwreck*”. Some young people have plunged themselves into a virtual world in order to flee from their difficult circumstances; others have become radicalized to fill this emptiness; people of all ages, including the elderly, are experiencing a type of spiritual depression and want more depth in their lives. Are we journeying with these contemporaries dissatisfied with their lives? How do we perceive their calls for their well-being and for a better life?



People thirst for a spirituality that will “restore more meaning, more soul, and a more solid base to their reality; a spirituality that will allow them to look deep within themselves to find their unforeseen resources,” says Jacques Grand’Maison in his book *Ces valeurs dont on parle si peu*. (p. 105)

Jesus used powerful words when he said “I came that they may have life and have it to the full.” (John 10:10) Do we not share in the same mission to liberate life?

Becoming companions on the journey of searchers of meaning seems to be a wonderful way of expressing our charism, as we are invited to do in the 2011 Chapter Acts: “God calls all people to abundant life. Because many are searching for meaning, we desire to promote a *culture of call* that helps people discern a meaningful path and pursue it with joy.” (p. 9)

During the Lenten Season, let us reach out to people, entering into contact with women, refugees, youth, the elderly, and others in search of meaning so as to discover their needs, their questions and their spiritual quests. Let us share with them the treasure which dwells within us and discover the treasure which dwells within them. During this year of mercy, may others find in us a place of love and peace where they feel welcomed, cared for, and encouraged. Let us open our doors wide! Happy are the merciful!