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Holy Year of mercy

Lent 2016

*"Give thanks to the Lord for he is good,
His mercy endures forever". Ps 136*

Dear sisters,

we are already in the second month of the new year 2016. Time is passing fast, though sometimes, in certain situations, suffering seem to be eternal. The Pope is recalling almost every day, in different circumstances with the theme of mercy. In Rome, after Christmas, we had the ongoing formation meeting and the theme was about mercy. Thanks for your total participation; as I have said earlier, your presence shows your will to follow Christ, conforming yourselves according to the indications of the Church; Besides, with your presence, you showed the desire of the encounter : where we feel the integral part of the family in which we belong by sharing the joy of the Fraternity.

The reflections of Don Luca were simple but profound, they were mainly contained in the document of *Misericordiae vultus*. He explained the etymology of each word that we may welcome it in it's real meaning and let it flow in us in order to savor the beneficial effects that it produces. We will be able to do this by focusing on the presence of Jesus of Nazareth, learning from his gestures and His attitudes of mercy to make it as a lifestyle.

The mercy of God transforms our hearts and make us experience a faithful love and that we in turn may capable of this mercy. I see in this year of grace, the necessity to reflect and confront on with the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, to know if we are in tune with what Jesus is asking of us. Also The Holy Father urges us, in this jubilee year, to reflect on the works of mercy to riawaken our conscience which often sleeps before the tragedy of poverty and and to enter more in the heart of the gospel which teaches us how to think, to fell and to live. "Let's not be lost - the Pope says - This favorable season of lent is propitious for our conversion".

"In the mercy of God, the consecrated life can be renewed and bloom again. In the mercy of God our community can find the way of reconciliation, of forgiveness and of a true fraternal life. The Mercy makes us to rediscover the sense of our togetherness as consecrated, to rediscover in the Eucharist the symbol of the community and of our mission. The mercy helps us to express with sincerity and humility, what we

think, to share the journey which we are doing, the difficulties that we encountered and the deepest desires of the heart.

We try to understand and experience the true meaning of community: family united in the name of the Lord, where we do the experience of God and communicate it to others. The religious community is above all a place "where we become sisters"; if we do not live as sisters, it is not possible to be fruitful" in prayer particularly in the fraternal life where we build our community.

There is no "perfect community" but the community can exist where there is mercy and not the complaints of those who take for granted that the community is not functional, the community can not grow and function where there is no love, and for this we build a world apart with some compensations which are not good and many accusations.

The Mercy helps us to expose and overcome the three temptations: to blame God for the difficulties encountered, to create a group of "dissatisfied people" to support and where we will just talk about changes but not changing ourselves first; Finally is the discouragement: "I can not carry this burden by myself alone."

Dear sisters, I think all of you have heard or read the beautiful homilies given by the Secretary of the Congregation for Religious, Archbishop Carballo for the closing of the year of Consecrated Life. He recalls us of JOY. Jesus, with the gift of a religious vocation He gave us something "beautiful and good", I add many things that allows us to be happy. We are called to experiment and show that God is able to fill our hearts and make us happy without the need to look elsewhere for our happiness. "My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete" says Jesus. But this joy we can not keep it jealously for us, we must irradiate it with the "face of those who are saved and loved. We should not be consecrated with "a style of Lent without Easter "or" living with a face of a funeral, "as Pope Francis stated. "Freely you have received, freely give." (Mt 10,8). Our joy is found in the Lord and it's shown on our faces when we glimpse the face of the merciful Father, giving forgiveness to those who ask for it and offering it to those who do not ask.

Dostoevsky says: "Lord, remind us that those who Love human beings (or the co- sisters) also loves their joy and without joy we can not live, all what is true and beautiful is always full of your infinite mercy."

"God heals the myopia from our eyes and let our gaze stops at the surface where there are mediocrity, superficiality, the diversity takes place": "God cleanses, gives grace, enriches and enlightens the soul by acting like the sun with its rays that dries, warms, beautifies and illuminates "(cf. Contemplate 58).

As religious, we are called to be merciful; from mercy always flows the joy. It is first of all to live in profound communion with God through prayer, meditation on the Word, the celebration of the Eucharist, so that all our life may become a continuous contemplation of the Mercy of God. In the measure that we become aware of the gratuitous love of the Lord which we receive in us, it also grows the tenderness in us, our understanding and our kindness towards our sisters.

In the experience of God's mercy and His love we will find also the point to harmonize our communities. There is a risk that talking much and more often of mercy it becomes a habit only without touching deeply our souls the recall or the reminder of the Holy Father. It is auspicious that we make a habit if we understand it as habitus, disposition to live the mercy every day in the context in which we are living. How many homilies, reflections, readings ... Let's not drop up in vain much wealth, much divine grace. Let us turn to Mary, our sweet Mother, "because She keeps us in joy and peace and reconciles us every day with Jesus. Transform our communities into places of hope, of the discovery of the Beatitudes, places in which the love drawn strength from prayer which is the wellspring of communion in which we are also called to become a pattern of life and source of joy "(John Paul II). Wish you a Happy and fruitful Lenten journey towards Easter!

With fraternal affection.

Rome, 02/01/2016

Mother Angelisa Spirandelli