

COMMUNIO IN CHRISTO

*Our Life -
Our Works*

Digital Spiritual Letter No. 17, August 17th 2022

Theme:

The Great Sign of Hope in a Charism

SEAT IN LIFE

Mother Marie Therese was the director of a fashion school for girls in her hometown of Valkenburg from 1948 - 1964. She accompanied the young people far beyond the measure of a teacher. When young girls applied for an apprenticeship at her school who were poor and could not pay the school fees, she would discreetly send them an envelope with money so that their fellow students would not even notice. These girls were then able to pay their school fees like everyone else.



Mother Marie Therese had a great love for children and the Youth and met them with a wide open heart. She had understanding for all their worries and needs, and she took the young people seriously. It was not by chance that in 1980 she was asked by God to carry out a foundation for the youth, to which she gave the name Youth Union „Our Future“. Regular meetings were held with Eucharistic celebrations and social gatherings. During this time, the children and youth could ask anything that interested them. Mother Marie Therese never failed to answer. Together with the priests and lay volunteers from our parish of St. John Baptist



in Mechernich, she organized youth camps in the Netherlands. She had a special eye on the young people who came to her from socially weak families. Unfortunately, the further development of the Youth Union was abruptly interrupted by slander and defamation. But Mother Marie Therese did not cease to reach out to individual young people who came to her seeking help, love and understanding.

In the following reflection, entitled „The Great Sign of Hope in a Charism,“ she gives a concrete example of a young girl who was willing to commit suicide but did not take this step out of cowardice. Mother Marie Therese took care of her, gave her time and attention, and accompanied her on her way to life.

Sr. Lidwina

REFLECTION OF MOTHER MARIE THERESE

April 20th, 1993

A young girl is standing on a riverbank. She is afraid of taking the final plunge into suicide. This time her struggle takes a favourable turn. She does not dare to take her life.

The girl belonged to a group of seven children - residents of a children's home - who attended my sewing courses at the vocational school. She was an inconspicuous girl, reserved and introvert.

Several weeks later I decided to examine the reason for her suicidal tendency. By talking to her I meant to find ways and means of preventing possible future attempts. It became evident that the girl had a very sad biography: She had met with little love, little understanding, little help. She did not know her parents. She had spent her childhood and adolescence in different homes, constantly teased and ridiculed because of her limp. When I asked her about the cause of her handicap the whole brutality of some of these children became apparent. The bodily injury remained unpunished. No-one was called to account but she was transferred to another home.

I did my best trying to help those children and actually succeeded in winning their confidence. We kept up contact till they were married and had children of their own. That was in 1949.

This is the year 1993 and a lot of things have changed since then. Amidst our modern world the young generation are helpless and left without orientation. They hold us responsible for all the disorder and confusion in the world. They accuse us of permanently talking about peace and a happy life for all without being able to muster the strength to realize all that. Peace cannot be realized if man turns his back on God. Nobody can advance happiness if the decisive word of God is missing. It is shocking to see the young resort to violence and by force of arms hold their own.



Some theologians keep trying to smother the traditional faith, describing God in such a way that people believe them and agree with their opinion that God were a cruel God. How can peace prevail if the offer of Christ is no longer taken seriously? We are living in a dangerous age. The growing unbelief accounts for the incalculability of our actions. At any time it can lead to a lust for power and to dictatorship. Much too soon we are prepared to violate human rights, and – meeting with no resistance – we turn into criminals. We can see plenty of evidence of it in Yugoslavia. Hatred has found its way into all spheres of life. We are up to the neck in growing discontent and greed.

Amidst all this there is my vocation standing its ground, determined to do as love demands. Before long another stage in building the extension of our hospice to make room for 70 more beds will be completed, providing a home for even more seriously ill people.

I am forced to acknowledge my own impotence and to admit that there is only one way out. I have been called upon to give evidence of God's loving kindness, so that others in their hopelessness and despair may find peace as well. Our hopes must not be dashed by loneliness and desolation. In my idealism I must not allow sin and guiltiness to prevail nor man to resort to acts of despair. Here, at this site, houses will be erected that will serve to relieve misery and plight.

The hope inherent in this sign is here to stay. This sign will bring freedom. A human being has been asked to recognize the true nature of things and to act accordingly. I must never be discouraged by resistance. Far from all false theories I have to act in accordance with my word of consent and commit myself to the misery and need of the poorest of the poor. I must be able to give my love to the damaged freedom and offer a home to those who are at death's door.



Wherever things may have reached an impasse this (my) charism – the great sign of our time – will pave the way to the freedom in Christ. In this sign God is showing his loving kindness, giving us security and hope as well as a goal to strive for. We want to be free. If someone has been seized by the love of God, freedom means the most intimate communion with God. Our present situation calls for and seeks such solutions. It requires peace and quiet. But instead of seeking them in the faith, man is overcome by weakness, prostrate with worry and grief. The feverishly hectic and nervous modern man keeps looking for something better, but with growing prosperity and luxury his prospects of finding it are dwindling more and more, as it is only to be found in God.

Once an Aids-patient addressed me asking: “Must I die?” I said: “All of us must sometime.” “I am so young. Everybody hedges when talking to me. Or else they keep reproaching me. Do you, too, think that I am guilty?” “We, all of us, are weak and guilty people, but if you mean that your illness is a divine punishment, I must most decidedly contradict you. It is God’s loving kindness that from time to time makes us realize how serious he is about the redemption. And he will say to you: In the security of this house be grateful and don’t take this life and this love for granted.

Try not to waste away in your sorrow, for what you have to bear is merciful grace for all, so that we may not remain silent and hard hearted towards those who have to endure the hardship of loneliness.”

It goes without saying that this charism, entrusted to me by God, risks approaching the misery and finds its fulfilment if the word of consent once given accepts the consequence of having to get active. My charities will give evidence of the presence of the love of God. It is his working, fulfilled in word and deed. Only if I – in accordance with my promise – help others, if my works help to heal others and make them happy, if others are made radiantly alive, only then God himself will be visible.

God

great and almighty,

just and full of grace.

Your kindness encourages me

to ascent to You.



*It is owing to Jesus Christ
that I am able to praise Your loving kindness.*

*In him You have revealed Yourself.
Unfathomable is Your omnipotence,
Your love immeasurable.*

*If I think I knew You,
You vanish from my awareness.*

*Incessantly I am seeking You
because I cannot exist without You.*

*If I think I had found You,
You are still far away.*

*If I imagine I knew all about You,
You let me feel how presumptuous I am.*

And yet I am able to love You.

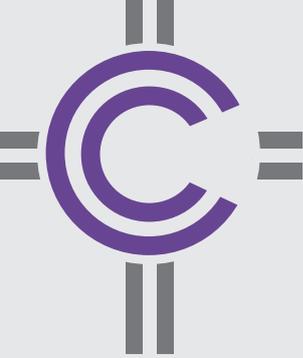
*In this love I realize
that it is gushing from You.*

*You keep turning my steps towards the Cross of Your Son,
where I have to confess to my being so utterly incapable, so impotent.*

*In Jesus You give me the power of faith,
filling me with a warmth
that makes me exclaim: I thank You.*

*I have descended to the very bottom of my nothingness,
in order to realize how precious it is
to live entirely in search of Your gracious mercy
and to beg You to strengthen me,
so that I can glorify You for Your kindness and grace.*

Every word that escapes my lips



is linked with the merits of Jesus Christ.

*Everyone of my deeds shall further Your plan
so that everything may be in accordance with my promise.*

*My thoughts shall never be a judgement
nor shall unloving criticism fill my heart.*

*My actions shall confirm that I am a child of Yours
and shall be a sign for the world to see Your presence.*

*My eyes shall have the radiance of Your love,
expression of my joy at my salvation.*

*My works shall reflect Your workings,
so that Your countenance may shine with Your love.*

*O Father, I cannot find the words
to bear witness to You.*

*You have done so much for me
that I can but thank You
in all eternity.*

*(Mother Marie Therese, „I implore you, o holy Church - in the name of the Spirit“,
Patris Verlag GmbH 2015, pp. 245-251)*



COMMENTARY

By Sr. Jane Rhita Kisembo G.S.S.

There is a great sign of hope in a charism because in it there is life and Joy. A charism is for purifying, sanctifying and salvation. From Mother Marie Therese's reflection, we realize that having concern for one another is very vital. Jesus urges us to love one another as he has loved us. This can only be done through the grace of God. Mother Marie Therese gives us an example of the young girl who had made a decision of committing suicide but later on changes her mind. Sometimes we do things because of the situation we are living in. We get discouraged, we lose hope and we feel lonely. Because of the situation at hand, the young girl had lost hope in herself. She had a very sad biography. Because of that, she was not living a happy life at all. In such a situation, it is very important to be there for an individual.

With the help of Mother Marie Therese, the young girl resumed her life. To have a disability is sometimes very challenging. However, if all of us had a concern for one another, it would not be such a big problem. In the Acts of the Apostles 12, the apostles shared and lived together in the proclamation of the Gospel. Today, the young generation really needs special attention amidst this challenging world. They are helpless and they are left with no guidance from the society. Many of them are discouraged and they have lost hope. This is because of the situation that they are going through. For example, some of them have lost their dear ones, parents or relatives. Others have either lost jobs or failed to get good paying jobs especially after their successful completion of their academic training.

In most cases we tend to mind about ourselves forgetting the needs of others. Mother Marie Therese shared the same spirit of togetherness. She looked after various categories of needy people. She did not aim at pleasing man but at following what was written in the scriptures. For instance in Col. 3:23-24, we read, "Whatever you do, do it from the heart as for the Lord and not for others, knowing that you will receive from the Lord the due payment of inheritance. Be slaves of the Lord Jesus Christ". The same spirituality /Charism is shared by the Good Samaritan Sisters in Uganda. Their founder Cardinal Emmanuel Nsubuga portrayed the love and service of Christ through the needy and the aged.

It has come to our attention that nowadays there is a great gap between the youth and the aged. The young ones are always blaming the elders that they have not guided them well along the path to eternity. More so, the elders are blaming the youth that technology and innovation has taken them up so much so that even they don't have time for sharing the word of God. This has surely brought a lot of problems in the life of the youth. Some of them even tend not to believe that God exists hence creating a lot of worry and concern for the mother church. Many people are becoming mentally disturbed and their health conditions are becoming a threat to many.

Both Cardinal Emmanuel Nsubuga in Uganda and Mother Marie Therese in Germany have in their life time tried all their best to see to it that such kinds of people are being given special attention so that they die happily without despair. This is exactly what the Good Samaritan in the Gospel of Luke: 10:25-37 did. We need to always encourage our neighbors to be good Samaritans to their fellows. This will bring hope, joy and love both here on earth as well as in the world to come.

PRAYER

God our Father,

you inspired your church with examples and teachings of people who lived holy lives and now they are rejoicing with you in your heavenly kingdom. May you graciously look upon our people of good will who are dedicated to the work and service of the poor, those who sacrifice their time for the sake of others.

Father, we also ask you to change our way of life. Create in us hearts of flesh so that we can see you in every creature that you created. Let us love them and act with justice towards them. Let us live a renewed life towards our fellow men and women. Make us know the gift of life and help us to protect it from all possible dangers. Give our society people who are really devoted to God's love by sharing all their possessions with the poor whole-heartedly and without discrimination.

May God's Love prevail everywhere. Let the Holy Spirit continue to guide us and show us the right path to eternity. May we always emulate Jesus the Good Samaritan who welcomes everyone and cares for their needs. We make our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ your son who lives and reigns in the unity of the Holy Spirit now and forever. Amen.



Sr. Jane Rhita standing in front of the portrait of their Founder Cardinal Emmanuel Kiwanuka Nsubuga at their Mother House Nalukolongo - Uganda.

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