



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF THE
CAPUCHIN TERTIARY SISTERS OF THE HOLY FAMILY**

Consistory Hall

Monday, 26 September 2022

[Multimedia]

Reverend Mother General,

Dear Chapter sisters,

I am pleased to be able to welcome you here today, on the occasion of the celebration of your 23rd General Chapter. I thank the Mother General for her warm words that express the benevolence of all the Capuchin Tertiary Sisters.

I see with satisfaction that you come from various corners of the world, and it is a good thing because it indicates that you truly live a spirit of welcome and universal sisterhood, in accordance with your special relationship with the “Holy Family”. From 34 countries, she said, right? You wished to express this attitude, proper to the family environment, in the motto of your General Chapter, which revolves around two ideas: humble listening and synodality. This is a nice thing, this sending the tongue on holiday and devoting oneself to listening [laughter], that you work more on hearing than on speaking. They are inspiring words, which have a deep root in religious life. In order to listen, the first thing that is needed is silence, deep silence, inner silence, the kind we find in prayer.

Very often our lifestyles are “full of noise”. As Saint Paul VI told us in his well-known discourse in Nazareth. It seems that the most important thing is to find that stimulus that is capable of attracting the attention of the other, that produces the most immediate response possible. For many, raising

the voice, physically or morally, presents itself as the solution to coax the deafened masses to opt for their idea or opinion, always looking for a way to ensure that their signal is heard more, that it is more attractive or surprising, to assert themselves. To one's dismay, one usually finds that those who had been called almost immediately turn away to flock to the call of a cry that is even more impactful. From one shout to another. This brutalizes, it brutalizes, be afraid of the word, this going from one cry to another, this brutalizes mankind, limiting our freedom to the point of making us slaves to those who have the ability to condition those signals, through the media, education, public or political opinion, thus imposing their agendas, in this way, with petulance, with complacency.

The prophecy that Jesus asks of us is indeed to go against this grain, to seek out silence, to detach ourselves from the world, from noise. This permits us to pay attention and, with artisanal patience, to identify the different sounds, to weigh them up and to distinguish them. In such a way, that initial clamour begins to take shape; what seemed dissonant will be understood and situated, it will have a name, it will have a face. No note will be too high or too low, and no sound will be strident to our ears if it finds the harmony that only our silence can give. And I say that only our silence can give it, because harmony is found, not imposed. How many times do we meet people who seem good, but they are not harmonious people, people who do not have an inner unity that can inspire them to go forth. That harmony that arises, that is not imposed.

The temptation is to have a beautiful melody in mind, and to reject or try to silence what is not in tune with it. I have my tune, I have my rhythm here, and all the rest is out. Temptation. But this is judging the other, placing oneself in God's place, deciding who deserves and who does not deserve to be there. It is a great arrogance, that must be combatted with the humility of our prophetic silence. If I will be capable of listening in this way, I will be able to hear all the voices clearly, all of them, understand their order, what they respond to, what they want to say, and why they say so in that way, at times in a way that is so disjointed and so unusual.

Dear sisters, be prophets of listening, first of all listening to the voice of God, who calls to you to love all without distinction, to love creation as his gift, to see his greatness in all, as Saint Francis teaches us in his *Canticle of the creatures*. This is the melody that stands out in a natural way, because it is the proper essence of all things. In this melody, even pain, darkness, death, find their meaning, as well as the brother in difficulty, those who are in need of forgiveness, in need of redemption, in need of a second chance; we can understand the reasoning of those who think differently from us, of those who contradict us, and even of our own limits.

It is precisely from this silence, from this silent listening to God, this silence in which man encounters God, that we can pass from cacophony to symphony. To the 'sin' (συν-) of synodality or, and this is the same thing, of walking together (συν-όδοϛ), to being a choir with one heart and one soul, even though we are in different times and situations. It is not a utopia, if we truly convince ourselves that raising our voices is not the path, that the only path is Jesus. I cannot

deny that it is the path of the cross, of humility, of poverty, of service. It is the path chosen by Saint Francis, and by your venerable founder, Luis Amigó, who meditated daily on the Passion, inviting you to embrace the style of littleness and mortification as the path of heaven. It is interesting that you know that each one of you, with her own voice — which must be listened to by the others, if there is a good spirit — contributes to this symphony of the heart, to this consonance of a community, which does not mean that everyone hears the same thing, thinks in the same way, but that they are harmonically united. And the only one capable of giving harmony is the Holy Spirit. Ask the Holy Spirit for harmony in your communities.

If, before the overwhelming silence of the Passion, the world is questioned like Pilate, and placed before the naked Truth, let us ask, in the words of Saint Paul VI, that the silence of Nazareth, which nurtured the Holy Family, teach you, in your specific vocation as religious, reflection and interiority, always being willing to listen to the good inspirations and doctrine of the true teachers, the necessity and value of proper formation, study, meditation, an intense interior life, personal prayer that only God sees (cf. Saint Paul VI, *Speech in Nazareth*, 5 January 1964) — this last part is from Saint Paul VI, all of it. And this in such a way that you may always be prophecy of that school of the Gospel which is the path of salvation for the world. Thank you. And I ask you not to forget to pray for me.

L'Osservatore Romano, Weekly Edition in English, 30 September 2022