

**CIRCULAR LETTER OF THE GENERAL SUPERIOR ON  
THE SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF  
THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN MARY  
December 8, 2012**

Prot. No 212/2012

Dear Confreres:

On our titular feast — the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary — we are united in faith and charity, once more being aware that we are bound by the same charism of the Holy Spirit and the same reply to the grace of vocation. Today we solemnly renew our religious vows, entrusting to God our past and our future, thus giving Him our life, works, struggles, and hopes: all in the service of Christ and the Church, after the example of Mary Immaculate and under her maternal protection.

This year we are celebrating our titular feast during special circumstances. First of all, on October 11, 2012, our Holy Father Benedict XVI opened the *Year of Faith*, encouraging all to be united with the Church and in the Church, "just like Christ, set out on the road, to lead the people out of the desert, to the place of life, into fellowship with the Son of God, towards the One who gives us life, and life in abundance" (*Porta fidei*, 2). In his apostolic letter *Porta fidei* that announced his decision, the Holy Father explained its historical and salvific sense and outlined a path "intended to help us understand more profoundly not only the content of the faith, but also the act by which we choose to entrust ourselves fully to God, in complete freedom" (*Pf*, 10). If we believe that Christ is the sense and center of history than, the *Year of Faith* is for us also a time of grace and strengthening of our unity with the Lord, an area of action of the Holy Spirit, leading to a deeper understanding of the charism of our religious community and our individual spiritual renewal. It also goes without saying that the 340th anniversary of the founding of the first Marian monastery in Puzzcza Korabiewska (1673) and the 290th anniversary of the papal approval of the first Constitutions of the Congregation of Marian Fathers (1723) happen during the same time as we end the Year of Blessed George Matulewicz. I trust that these circumstances will become our Congregation's points of reference for the next year.

**1. Immaculate Conception of the Mother of our Lord – a gift and a vocation**

Scrutinizing the thought of Blessed Father Founder, as well as of our other Revered Fathers, we note that the mystery of the Immaculate Conception has been made manifest in the person of Mary. This is a gift given to the Mother of our Lord – as if made flesh in her – the gift that prophesies her divine motherhood and announces the coming of our Redeemer. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit, which is understood in full and only through the relation to another immaculate conception – the conception of her Son. We also recognize this gift as a privilege – Mary's exceptionality and uniqueness – because this gift sets her free from the regrettable heritage of the original sin. Here we find the justification for Blessed Father Founder's delight in the *Full of grace* and the tone of the Collect for the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, the Collect that existed already in his time.

Such an understanding of the gift granted to Mary opens on the one hand, the immensity of God's salvific love offered to mankind; and on the other hand, it demands a continuous response throughout her entire life. Thus, the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of our Lord contains within itself a vocation, the very plan of God in regard to Mary. For just like the Immaculate Conception does not exist as such, there exists instead the Person of our Lord's Mother, to whom the grace of a holy conception was granted; and so, this very gift is not abstract, not destined for Mary's splendor or elevation but it is weaved into the *work of salvation*. For the understanding of these points, the Gospel account of the *Annunciation* comes to mind. The mystery of Mary (*Full of grace, the Lord is with you*) revealed in the Angel's words, provided the soil for planting the seed of her vocation, in other words: God's offer to become the Mother of the Son of the Most High. These are the circumstances, in which Mary must respond to the word of the Annunciation. A special and exceptional gift places her before a special and exceptional calling: God makes a request and awaits a special and exceptional response. In this response we find in the word Mary's faith, in her total and unquestioning entrustment of herself to the One, from whom she received everything. Everything in her was His, nothing was her own, from the first moments of her existence, through Calvary, the Resurrection of her Son, and the descent of the Holy Spirit until her falling asleep in the Lord and going to the house of the Father. This way she became our model of dedicating ourselves to our dearly beloved God and to the service of Christ and the Church (*Pro Christo et Ecclesia*). As the Marians who bear her name, we are not only endowed with a special grace of vocation in the Church. We are called to actualize Mary's manner of life and service to Christ on the road of faith in the Church and the world. Oh that everything in us is of God and for God, nothing of our own. Oh that He would fulfill in us His work as He did in Mary. Oh that we not hinder Him, but rather heeding His Word, through faith we give a response with our whole life.

## **2. Year 2013 – the Year of the Marian Community**

October 24, 2013, will mark the 340th anniversary of approval of the first Marian community by Bishop Jacek Świącicki. This act set out the process of shaping the way of life, which the Holy Spirit imprinted on the Founder's soul (cf. *Foundation of the House of Recollection*, No. 6). Fifty years after the building of the first house, the fundamental directives of the Congregation of Marian Fathers' were completed: On September 3, 1723, Pope Innocent XIII approved the first Marian Constitutions. This happened shortly after the Founder's death, 290 years ago.

The above historical circumstances are important reference points for our *hic et nunc*, because they indicate that the essence of our religious consecration is a life in a religious community approved by the Church in accordance to ratified laws that express the charism of our religious Institute. This is the first reason for the year 2013 to be a *Year of the Marian Community*.

Another, no less important reason is the fact that after nearly two years of fulfilling the office of General Superior and having conducted visitations in the vast majority of our religious houses I notice certain signs of crisis in our common life. As much as we refer to theory or statements the confreres seem to clearly understand the principles of our religious life, in *praxis* of the same life certain dismissive attitudes can be frequently observed. Some confreres seem to forget the need to continuously foster the spirit of faith in accordance with all principles and practices of common life, to which a confrere obliges himself to fulfill by making his vows. The religious consecration not only requires a specific degree of faith necessary for a one-time entrustment of oneself to God in a religious community, but it also entails a constant care for the growth of one's relationship with God. Many confreres give positive examples of such concern for their faithfulness to the Lord and the priority of spiritual life, thus providing others good reference points, examples of a wise correlation of a life of prayer and a life of service, while proving with their lives that a fruitful apostolic work is not in opposition to contemplation. It seems that the cause for some confreres' confusion lies in their indifferent and neglectful attitude toward their spiritual life. By putting action – even the most beneficial one – before one's spiritual life, a religious loses his azimuth and throws away many aspects of common life, the understanding of which is found only in one's faith in the Lord. In time, instead of seeking the grace of conversion and the strength flowing out of a deep life in God, a religious decides to alter his life and to adjust it to his own, already changed mentality. Such incidents are always very tragic.

By the will of the Church, we shall live out the next year as the *Year of Faith*. For us, this is an opportune time to rediscover our original love for Christ and the Church. This love is nourished by faith, while it draws strength from the regular life of the sacraments, studying and meditating on the Scriptures, individual prayer, and spiritual reading. Let us not allow the spirit of the world to manipulate us, but if we become aware of the first signs [of such manipulation] it means that the Holy Spirit beckons us to convert, to return to the source of our vocation and our true happiness.

### **In view of the above I declare the year 2013 A Year of Community.**

In our effort to restore common life to its proper place, may we be guided and assisted by our Blessed Father Founder. I don't mean only the historic remembrance of the founding of the first Marian monastery, but mostly of his legacy of teachings that he left to us as a signpost and of his fatherly intercession, which we continue to experience along with many of the faithful. Above all, very close to us are the Blessed's words from his *Norma Vitae* (II, 4): "Concerning mutual love: let it be known that the one who excels in mutual love is more dear to the Divine Majesty. Each of you should keep in mind that the soul of his Institute is love, and to the extent that he withdraws from love, he withdraws from life. Therefore, even as he will promote good, reputation, integrity, and holiness of the whole Congregation, so will he render to the individual members of this same Congregation all those things which he would wish for himself. And so he will avoid this contagious disease very opposed to love: envy, hatred, rancor, rivalry, suspicion, calumny, exclusive attachment, antipathy, jealousy, secret accusation, jeering, whispering, verbal abuse, annoyance, ambition, contempt for others, disturbances, agitations, quarrels, contentions. As he will watch over the tranquility of his own spirit, so he, a zealous guardian of love, will also give great care to guarding the tranquility of others and of the whole house. He will suitably drive away any evil both from the whole Congregation and from each of its members. Call to mind the love of the early Church, about which the writer of the Acts of the Apostles says, 'The community of believers were of one heart and one mind.'"

#### **Dear Confreres:**

In the context of the *Year of Faith*, I encourage you all to ponder particularly – especially during your individual and common reflection and prayer – the foundation of our vocation, which is our common life. In this aspect, days of monthly recollection, renovations, retreats, conventions, and proper selection of spiritual reading will most certainly help.

Although the concern for living faith and allegiance to the common life is internal and personal, "faith comes from what is heard, and that what is heard comes through the word of Christ" (Rom 10:17). Common life is nourished by a true witness of faith and love. May we always take great care proclaiming Christ, both by word and example of life, being mindful that we help one another this way and become more than a group of men gathered to achieve specific goals, but a community of life that shares one faith, one charity, and one charism. Mary, the Mother of the Lord and our Mother, gives us an example of faithfulness to Christ in good and in bad. On the solemnity of her Immaculate Conception I entrust you all to the Triune God and the intercession of saints and I ask you to pray for me so that I may fulfill everything, to which the Lord has called me.

*Immaculata Virginis Mariae Conceptio sit nobis salus et protectio!*

Andrzej Pakuła, MIC  
General Superior