

**THE SUPERIOR GENERAL'S LETTER
FOR THE SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN MARY 2016**

Rome, December 8th, 2016
Prot. N. 198/2016

Dear Confreres,

This year, the celebration of our titular feast comes in between two great events which our entire Congregation experiences by the will of Divine Providence. The first one was the long-awaited canonization of our holy Founder, Father Stanislaus of Jesus and Mary Papczyński, celebrated on June 5th. We continue to draw strength and inspiration from the canonization's fruits, not only by recalling the experience of this grace, but also by extending it through holding many celebrations of thanksgiving in our provinces, vicariates, and parishes. The second event, the fruits of which will also be of importance for the whole Congregation, is the upcoming General Chapter. It starts on February 6th and is scheduled to close on Sunday, February 26, 2017. Let us take a closer look at these events, while we give thanks for the mercy that we have experienced manifested in the canonization, as well as pray for obedience to the Holy Spirit at the time of the General Chapter and afterwards.

In the school of the Immaculate Mother of the Lord

The words of the Holy Father during the Canonization Mass sunk deep into the hearts of many of us. He said in his homily that the life of our holy Father Stanislaus revealed God's victory over suffering and death, that he always remained closely united to the passion of Christ, and that the power of Christ's resurrection manifested itself in him. In this way, our Founder became a witness to the mystery of the resurrection for the whole Church, and within it, to us, his spiritual sons. According to Pope Francis, this Gospel of hope, was "born of Christ's paschal mystery" and its "splendor is seen on the face of the Risen Lord and reveals God our Father as one who comforts all of us in our afflictions."

Our holy Father learned to stay in close union with the suffering, crucified, and risen Christ in the school of Mary, the Immaculate Mother of the Lord. She – a masterpiece of Divine Mercy – who was immersed from her very conception in the life of the Holy Trinity and formed by the Father in the Holy Spirit to be the Mother of the Son of God, who was always heeding and obeying the word of God, has become to our Father Founder a model of the new man, a true disciple of Christ. For this reason, borrowing the words of St. Ambrose, he wrote: "Mary was such a person, that her life can be a school for all" (*Prodromus Reginae Artium*). In one of the meditations in his *Inspectio Cordis* he adds: "O my soul, thus far you've been using books that treated various fields of science; today read a new, fresh, and unseen book: The Most Holy Mother of God, the Book fashioned, written, and adorned by God Himself. Could you find anywhere else something that you would not have in Mary? Could anyone provide you more of what Mary has? It is a book of virtues and all kinds of perfection: It is divided into as many chapters as there are virtues. Therefore, leafing through the Book, apply yourself to studying it; collect the flowers so indispensable for your state in life."

Contemplating the Mother of the Lord, we find the path of our vocation, while in her Immaculate Conception, we recognize the charism of our religious community. In this context, the words of St. John Paul II, addressed in 1993 to the Congregation on occasion of its General Chapter take on a new meaning: "Dear Marian Fathers, your Congregation is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary and its spirituality is eminently and radically Marian. It is not only about the piety, which is always timely and necessary, but also about the program and the all-encompassing ideal of life, as well as of pastoral activity. May your gaze be always fixed on Mary. May your every decision, every apostolic initiative be in accord with her Immaculate and Sorrowful Heart." The path of life of our holy Father ran through the school of Mary, of the Holy Spirit, thanks to which he has become, like Mary, a witness of the resurrection, a sign that the Father's mercy is stronger than death and the evils of the world. It is also our path of life, of our presence in the Church, and the style of our ministry.

General Chapter 2017

The General Chapter, together with the associated provincial and general vicariate Chapters, is a special time for the Congregation. If we entrust ourselves and our entire community to Jesus, the Lord of history, these events take on a historic and salvific meaning, while the time measured by the clock – *chronos*, becomes the time of salvation, the space opportune for and favorable to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives – *kairos*. As a Congregation, we have clear signs indicating that we live in a time of salvation, and that God in His Providence guides our Congregation and imparts to us His blessing. It is

enough to mention here the gift of the canonization, received during the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. I trust that we shall live out the general and local chapters in a spirit of faith and submission to God, the Lord of history. For this reason, in my letter convening the General Chapter of 2017, I asked all the confreres and every community to pray daily: First, starting on August 15th for the Congregation in the words of Bl. George Matulaitis-Matulewicz, and then, just before the opening of the Chapter, from January 27, 2017 (the Feast of Bl. George) the Novena through the intercession of St. Stanislaus Papczyński either as part of or instead of the Marian prayers.

In addition to working on objectives specified by our by-laws (C 237), the upcoming General Chapter will undertake a task, both difficult and responsible: It will work on our Constitutions and Directory. Let me remind you that in its decree No. 3 the previous General Chapter, celebrated in Rome from February 4-19, 2011, obliged the Superior General and his Council to appoint a Committee on the Constitutions and Directory. Its task was set to revise and propose probable changes, as well as to edit the standing Constitutions and Directory. According to that decree, the results of the Committee's work were to be presented at the next General Chapter. For this reason, the expected duration of the Chapter was extended by one week: Usually the Chapter lasts for two weeks, yet this time we plan for three. I trust that the meeting will strengthen us all in the grace of our vocation, and that the Chapter will develop such legal provisions, which will express the charism of our religious community according to the new times and our self-awareness. I shall add that the work on our Constitutions is our response to the expectations of the Church, expressed in the most recent documents that demand creative fidelity: "In this spirit there is a pressing need today for every Institute *to return to the Rule*, since the Rule and Constitutions provide a map for the whole journey of discipleship, in accordance with a specific charism confirmed by the Church. A greater regard for the Rule will not fail to offer consecrated persons a reliable criterion in their search for the appropriate forms of a witness which is capable of responding to the needs of the times without departing from an Institute's initial inspiration" (*Vita consecrata*, 37).

Dear Confreres,

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary has a special meaning for us: Today we renew our vows, embrace each other with mutual prayer, kindness, and care. Let us especially remember our elderly and sick confreres, as well as those who left this world in the past year, going to the Father's House. As a religious community, united by the bonds of faith, hope, and love and living out the same charism, let us give thanks to our merciful God for the great gift of the canonization of our holy Father Founder, and let us commend to the Holy Spirit our general and provincial chapters. We understand that much depends on our openness to the light of the Holy Spirit and our docility to His inspirations. Today, I especially entrust our entire community to our merciful God and to the intercession of the saints, especially of Mary Immaculate, our holy Father Founder Stanislaus and Blessed George, the Renovator of our Congregation.

Immaculata Virginis Mariae Conceptio sit nobis salus et protectio!