

Rome, December 8, 2018  
Prot. No. 180/2018

**CIRCULAR LETTER OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL  
ON THE SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF  
THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

Dear Confreres:

God in His Providence grants us another opportunity to celebrate the titular feast of our Congregation: the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Most B.V.M. This becomes our chance today, as it does every year, to express our gratitude to the Good God, not only for the grace of calling our community to serve the Church, but also for our personal vocation within it.

The year which is ending was rich in events both in the whole Church and in our Congregation. First of all, the eyes of the whole Church, as well as of the world, were turned to the Synod of Bishops on young people. In our Congregation, I promulgated the renewed Constitutions, ratified by the General Chapter last year, and I issued a special letter on that occasion, explaining the adopted changes. It contained a broad historical and theological background, and it was to be studied during a conference on one of the Days of Recollection and to assist us to more deeply understand the reasons for the new wording of our by-laws. The new Constitutions are not yet available in all languages. Yet, we must remember that this year's renewal of our religious vows on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception should be done in accordance with the new formula of religious profession. Also, this new formula must be used during the profession of first vows, for their renewal and for the perpetual vows. We are gradually advancing in our preparations to celebrate the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the foundation of our Congregation: a specially appointed committee is now preparing a program and appropriate materials. The celebrations will open December 8<sup>th</sup> of next year.

**Together with the whole Church, we contemplate the mystery of the  
Immaculate Conception of the Mother of Our Lord**

Article Seven of our renewed Constitutions provides a deepened theological reflection on the mystery of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of Our Lord. It also speaks in detail about the impact of this mystery of the Faith on our Marian spirituality. This article is entitled "With Mary Immaculately Conceived." In view of its particular importance, it is worthwhile to quote it here in full: "In the following of Christ, the Immaculate Virgin Mary assists us and shows us the way. From her conception, free from sin and full of grace and filled with the gratuitous love of the Holy Spirit, she is the fruit of the paschal victory of Christ and the first partaker of the redemption. She reveals the creative and salvific love of the Most Holy Trinity; she is the image of the new man capable of a relationship with God and others, the beginning of the new People of God and the seed of a new humanity. Contemplating the Immaculate Conception of Mary together with the whole Church, let the confreres come to know this mystery, love, profess, celebrate and proclaim it. Let them draw inspiration from it for their spiritual life, communal life, and apostolate. By this mystery above all, Mary urges the confreres to trust in the unlimited fruitfulness of the work of redemption, to avoid all sin, to love purity of heart, to imbue life fully with divine grace and charity, and to so build up the Church in unity 'that it be holy and immaculate' (Eph 5:27)."

We discover the mystery of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of the Lord at a time in her adult life, described in the pages of the Gospel, when God invites Mary to a more involved co-operation with the saving plan of God, to which she gives her assent. This is how we recognize that this gift and privilege is not exclusively reserved for Mary, but is the fruit of Christ's paschal victory as well as a sign of the participation in His work of redemption. It is granted not for Mary's glorification and elevation, but in service to the redemption of men. As her spiritual sons, we are also immersed through Baptism and the other sacraments in the salvific mystery of God, just like Mary was. May we – together with Mary – become "holy and immaculate" (Eph 1:4). This way, the mystery of her holy conception would become not

only our inspiration, but also our experience of Faith in the Holy Spirit: by realizing the Word in our lives and submitting our beings to the Word through the victory of divine power and love over our weakness and sinfulness, by our docile faith in God's plans both in regards to us personally and to our entire religious community. "God's creative love," to which our Constitutions refer, is always greater than our ability to comprehend things, and the only answer is the one, which we find expressed by Mary at the moment of the Annunciation: "I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38). Today, let us ask the Lord – through the intercession of His Mother – that we would entrust ourselves and our community to God in the same way that Mary entrusted her life and thus to give the witness of our Faith to all our brethren.

### **The Challenges for our Congregation that result from the Synod dedicated to the young people**

On October 3-28, 2018, a Synod entitled "Youth, faith and vocational discernment" took place in Rome. Its deliberations were dedicated to young people from 16 to 29. They number approximately 1.8 billion persons worldwide, which is nearly one-quarter of the entire world's population. Many important and timely observations concerning the ministry to youth were made both during the preparations for and proceedings of this Synod. They are essential guidelines for our own apostolate, especially in the field of vocational ministry. During my regular visitations of our Provinces and General Vicariates, I have been able to observe that this particular ministry suffers from limitations and misinterpretation on the part of our confreres. Naturally, vocation directors are appointed; yet, I have the impression that – generally – the total concern for vocations is being heaped on these appointees who are only asked about the number of candidates they were able to obtain for the Congregation. It would seem that we either forget or refuse to remember that concern for vocations to serve God in the Church is an essential element of every form of pastoral ministry. In this context, it is worth recalling words from the *Message of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Participants in the Conference on the Pastoral Work for Vocations "Vocational ministry and consecrated life: prospects and hopes"* from Nov. 25, 2017: to speak of vocational ministry is to affirm that all pastoral action of the Church is oriented, by its very nature, to vocational discernment [...] Vocational service must be seen as the soul of all evangelization and of all the Church's pastoral ministry." From this perspective, we are all vocation directors. However, many of us either are not aware of this or we refuse to acknowledge it. Therefore, I propose that the Province and General Vicariate Superiors review the matter of awakening vocations in their entities and dedicate one of their conventions to it. As the basis for their reflections and to draw practical conclusions, they should use the Synod's documents. The *Instrumentum laboris* of the Synod on Youth confirms the existence of such a need, by stating in art. 86: "there is the need to lay the foundation for a broad 'vocational youth pastoral care' that can be meaningful to all young people."

### **Beloved Confreres:**

Today we have the opportunity to deepen our prayers, to renew our religious vows and to reflect on our charism. In a special way, I greet all of you, and in my prayer, I entrust you to the Mother of Our Lord, Mary Immaculately Conceived, who is also our Mother and Patroness. May she beseech for us the grace of a grateful and creative fidelity to the Holy Spirit, the giver of all gifts and charisms. Today, I pray for all of you in a special way, particularly for the confreres who are elderly and sick, for those who feel alone, or suffer a crisis of vocation. I entrust all of you to the merciful God and to the intercession of the saints, above all, our holy father, St. Stanislaus and Blessed George, our Renovator. I am asking you also for prayer for me, that I may faithfully fulfill the ministry which the Lord entrusted to me.

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

Fr. Andrzej Pakuła, MIC  
Superior General