

Rome, December 8, 2019  
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**SUPERIOR GENERAL'S LETTER  
ON THE SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF  
THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN MARY OF 2019,  
INAUGURATING THE 350<sup>TH</sup> JUBILEE OF THE ORIGIN OF  
THE CONGREGATION OF MARIAN FATHERS**

*Divine Providence, whose power expands from end to end, ruling everything with sweetness, and whose paths are not ours, desired to raise this tiny Marian flock dedicated to the most beloved and Immaculate Mother not only within the borders of the one Kingdom of Poland, where its roots are, but to spread all over the world.*

**Dear Confreres,**

As we open today the celebrations of the 350<sup>th</sup> Jubilee of the origin of our Congregation, we see the above sentence, entered by Fr. Alexis Octavian Fisher in the, *Protocollum Balsamensis* in 1758, as a perfect expression of our entire religious community's experience throughout its history. It is the experience of trust in Divine Providence's protection over us, which has its roots in the spirit of St. Stanislaus, our holy Father Founder, who expressed this trust in God in his Testament: "To all present and to each of my future Brothers and Companions [I am] assigning for ever the greatest Foundation: the Providence of the Most Generous God." Also, today, the same Providence guides the history of our religious community and ushers us into this Jubilee.

**Importance of This Jubilee**

"In the Church's history, every jubilee is prepared for by Divine Providence." Saint John Paul II used these words in his apostolic letter, *Tertio millennio adveniente* (17) to describe the theological perspective of a jubilee. The same document also provides other meanings and the goals of a jubilee: "a time dedicated in a special way to God" (12), it gives "impetus to the renewal" (19) of faith and the bond with God, it "is always an occasion of special grace, 'a day blessed by the Lord'" and "it is thus a time of joy;" it "is meant to be a great prayer of praise and thanksgiving," and "the joy of every Jubilee is above all, a joy based upon the forgiveness of sins, the joy of conversion" (32). "Everything ought to focus on the primary objective of the Jubilee: the strengthening of faith and of the witness of Christians" (42). I trust that our celebrations of the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the origin of our religious community will contribute to the renewal of our faith and our personal bond with the Lord who called us; to the deepening of our identity and the awareness of our charism; to our giving witness to who we are and to the purpose of our existence in the Church; to our re-discovering what Christ and His Immaculate Mother, our Patroness, mean to us; to strengthening our bonds with our holy Father Founder, Saint Stanislaus, who – always obedient to the Holy Spirit – gave rise to our religious community.

Since we are an apostolic community, all our actions should include a pastoral dimension. First, our very Jubilee, if it is lived as a special time of grace and regarded as the Lord's another call to conversion, has a chance to become evangelization through our witness of faith. Consequently, giving witness to our vocation may attract young men to our community. Also, our faithfulness to the Lord and His grace results in the radiance of our charism and gathers around us the lay faithful wishing to live out our spirituality. This is the main reason that the Jubilee Commission and then the Provincial and Vicariate Superiors during their common meeting in Rome in September of this year proposed that the Jubilee work of our Congregation be to introduce to our parishes and rectoral churches the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary (during or immediately after the Jubilee).

The Confraternity, included in our most recent Constitutions as a lay association proper to the Congregation, would allow for the better propagation of our charism, while bonding the lay faithful more closely with our community. Naturally, this does not prevent each Province from establishing other Jubilee works: evangelization, education, mercy, etc.

### **Timeframe and Jubilee Events**

The Jubilee celebrations are extended over a period of four years from December 8, 2019 to December 8, 2023. The official opening is today's celebration of the Second Vespers of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary at the General House, presided over by Archbishop José Rodríguez Carballo, Secretary of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. The exact anniversary of the origin of the Congregation, i.e. 350 years, falls on December 11, 2020. Starting the celebration, a year earlier and commemorating the events preceding this date, gives us the opportunity to prepare and properly live out this anniversary. The Jubilee will close on December 8, 2023, the day of the Congregation's titular feast. That year will mark the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the approval of the Marian Congregation's first religious house in the Korabiew Forest by Bishop Jacek Świącicki. Our extending the Jubilee celebrations over four years provides a historical reference to the shaping of our Congregation, i.e. from its charismatic beginning expressed in the *Oblatio* to the establishing of the first religious community.

The four-year celebrations were planned in such a way as to give each individual year a special topic. These topics define our identity, while creating a message; they are: *Consecrated for Christ and the Church* (2020); *In the School of the Immaculate Conception of Mary* (2021); *On the Paschal Path* (2022); *On the Charismatic Mission* (2023). Conferences for monthly Days of Recollection will be prepared every year during the Jubilee period. The main subjects of both the conferences and the Jubilee events will be related to the themes of the individual years, which will deepen our self-reflection in relation to our charism and provide inspiration for the renewal of the spiritual life both on an individual and a community dimension. Special collective and formation events are planned for each year: in 2020, it will be the General Convention and the World Congress of Lay Collaborators; in 2021, a meeting in Licheń of the Marians in initial formation worldwide, and regional symposia on the School of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, organized by the Provinces and General Vicariates as part of their annual conventions; in 2022, a meeting of young Marians from around the world and an academic session in Warsaw, and later, Provincial and General Vicariates conventions on the Paschal Path of the Congregation; in 2023, we will celebrate the General Chapter, during which members of the Chapter, led by the Superior General, will entrust the Congregation to the Virgin Mary in the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. At the end of the Jubilee, together with the traditional renewal of vows on December 8, 2023, all local communities will entrust to the Immaculate Virgin Mary the Congregation and the individual confreres, using the act of entrustment previously used during the General Chapter.

A detailed program of the Jubilee celebrations of the entire Congregation will be announced in a special document. In addition, individual Provinces and Vicariates shall prepare their own programs.

### **Oblatio – the Jubilee's fundamental point of reference**

The key moment for our Congregation was the making of the act of the *Oblatio* by Saint Stanislaus Papczyński, traditionally called by us as the act of *Offering Oneself*. Today we know – thanks to the newest historical and theological research – that the *Oblatio* was, according to the intention of Father Founder, a formula of the religious vows in a new religious community, which he raised to life by this act. Consequently, Brother Stanislaus Krajewski, the Founder's first companion and the second member of the new community of Marian Fathers, made his vows before Father Founder by reciting the formula of the same *Oblatio*, which St. Stanislaus had recited after receiving the indult to leave the Piarists. This *Oblatio*, made on December 11, 1670, gave birth to our Congregation. The General Chapter, held in Rome in 2017, solemnly proclaimed this fact in the Declaration, thus restoring the longest tradition of our community. We want to commemorate this fundamental event, giving rise to the Congregation, in 2020, in a two-fold manner.

First, on December 8, 2020, or almost exactly 350 years since the *Oblatio*, all of us, spiritual sons of Saint Stanislaus, shall make our *Oblatio* in commemoration of that event, by reciting – in place of the traditional formula of the vows – the same formula that Father Founder recited. Only in this year, will we renew our vows by reciting the text of the *Oblatio*, doing so as we usually renew our vows each year on our titular celebration: publicly, in all communities, before a gathering of the lay faithful (parishioners, members of the Association, and the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception, friends, etc.). While reciting the *Oblatio*, we must remember that this is a symbolic and one-time act. Therefore, in order to avoid confusion, our reciting of the *Oblatio* must be preceded by an appropriate introduction, explaining to all present at the celebration that it is not a new formula of the religious vows, but rather a manner of commemorating the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the historically first Marian vow. An appropriate

booklet of a formative and vocational nature speaking about the *Oblatio* and the Congregation of Marian Fathers will be prepared for the lay faithful. The appropriate text will be prepared for all of the Confreres to read aloud.

Earlier, during the General Convention in October 2020, a special symposium on the *Oblatio* and consecration will take place. In addition to the issues established for such meetings in our Constitutions (C 276, D 250), the Convention participants will reflect on the meaning of religious consecration, with particular emphasis on the document of the *Oblatio*, which lay at the beginning of our Congregation. Our reflection on important elements of the religious life may give a new impetus both to the revival and the deepening of our charism, as well as to rediscovering the grace of our calling to a special closeness with God and service in the Church. In view of the rapidly progressing secularization in today's world, pondering the most important matters of our community and personal life – among which is religious consecration in the context of the *Oblatio* – gives us a chance for conversion and a return to our "original love" (cf. Rev 2: 4).

### **Thanksgiving and reconciliation with God**

During the Jubilee, we shall look at our history from the perspective of faith and discern the beautiful events, marked by service to the Church and the holiness of our confreres who preceded us on the path of the Marian vocation. These men have written, thanks to their wonderful and generous cooperation with the grace of God, beautiful pages in the history of our Congregation, which makes us proud. We rejoice in their joy and, out of a sense of participation in the patrimony of our community, we share with others the good that our predecessors brought to the history of the Church and the human community. This attitude is both right and proper. Celebrating the Jubilee gives us all the opportunity to thank God for the favors shown to us throughout history as well as our confreres' response which was full of faith.

Looking back on the past, we must not forget such events, affecting both the whole community and the individual confreres, which we judge today as sad and tragic, scandalizing the community of the whole Church. This is particularly a matter of incidents marked by a loss of faith or sin. Just as we rejoice in sharing the common good of the whole Congregation, we cannot pretend to be unconcerned about shameful events. One of the goals of the Jubilee is to "give an account" of the past, as it were, just as we do during an examination of conscience. We thank God for all the good, we apologize for evil and ask forgiveness in order to reconcile with God and our fellow men, especially those who have experienced scandal. Our communal act of apologizing to God and the Church for both communal and individual sins will be celebrated – as we do every year on October 24, the "Day of Atonement and Penance" – during the General Convention in Licheń. We believe that the confession of sins in a spirit of penance will prepare our hearts to give greater thanksgiving for God's gifts and graces, while strengthening our entire community in its continuous striving in faithfulness to the charism and the grace of our calling.

Reconciliation with God and with the confreres fits in with the tradition of "*the indulgence*, which is one of the constitutive elements of the Jubilee. The indulgence discloses the fulness of the Father's mercy, who offers everyone his love, expressed primarily in the forgiveness of sins" (*Incarnationis misterium*, 9). During the Jubilee, there will be a chance to gain indulgences for us, members of the Congregation of Marian Fathers and our Internal Co-workers, as well as for all lay faithful who would participate in the Jubilee events or visit designated churches or chapels. Indulgences will be available at specific locations and times, in accordance with the conditions set forth by the Apostolic Penitentiary. The full list of indulgences will be announced later by a special Penitentiary letter.

### **Entrustment to the Immaculate Mother, Patroness of our Congregation**

We entrust to the Immaculate Virgin Mary, our spiritual Mother and Patroness, the Jubilee of our Congregation's origin. The Solemnity of her Immaculate Conception is a bridge connecting the beginning and the end of the Jubilee celebrations. The character of our religious community has been remarkably Marian from the very beginning; it is incorporated into the title of the Congregation. However, our Marian character has a special trait. It is the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of the Lord. This charismatic dimension of our Marian character has been present from the very beginning of the Congregation. Our community has always been aware of the central place of the Immaculate Conception of Mary in our charism, although it was expressed in various ways, while many of our confreres – also those very important to our history – have spent years in gaining an understanding of the charism of their religious community. The most emphatic example of this is the testimony of Blessed George Matulaitis-Matulewicz, the Renovator of our Congregation, who noted in his *Journal*: "I thank You, Lord,

for having given me such extraordinary feelings of love for the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In the past, I found this prayer difficult. But now, how sweet it is to fall at her feet and to immerse myself in prayer!" (60). Also, our contemporary awareness of the Congregation's identity has matured to the point of defining the mystery of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary as "the essence of the charism of the Congregation" that has been "from the very beginning of its existence a special sign, strength and joy of the Marian vocation" (C 2). In this context, the Jubilee motto was formulated in the following manner: *Ad honorem Immaculatae Conceptionis Mariae* (in honor of the Immaculate Conception of Mary). We turn our gaze towards her, especially at the present time, in the hope of her constant intercession for us, her spiritual sons who bear her name. May her ability to listen to the Holy Spirit, her obedience to the Word of God, her total entrustment of herself to God in situations exceeding human reasoning also become our part. May she who always submitted herself to God's action and dedicated her life for the salvation of the world, implore for us the grace of total and sacrificial devotion in the service of Christ and the Church.

### **Jubilee prayer**

Almighty God and Father,  
In Your Providence,  
You have been shaping  
the Congregation of Marian Fathers from the beginning  
– Your possession,  
raised into existence by the Holy Spirit  
in cooperation with our father, St. Stanislaus  
to proclaim to all peoples and nations the deed of the redemption  
carried out by Your Son,  
born of the Blessed Virgin Mary.  
Grant, we pray, that the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the origin of our community  
will renew and strengthen the charism in us,  
poured into our hearts by Your Spirit.  
May our life, immersed in You,  
become a witness before others to Your salvific love.  
Obedient to You as the Immaculate Mother of Your Son was,  
transformed in the Holy Spirit,  
we, individually and as a community,  
want to respond to your salvific plan:  
"That we should be holy and immaculate before Your sight" (cf. Eph 1: 4).  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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