

Powerful Foundational Words

The following two articles '**Theological Foundations of Our Spirituality of Incarnation**' and '**Our Charism Today**' draws our attention in an inspiring and focused way on the Theology and Spirituality of the Congregation. In reading them we need to be aware of the context in which they were written.

Firstly, considerable research was undertaken in preparation for the writing of the Constitutions of 1982. These two articles were written by Sr Christillia Blanchard in 1997. However, my sense is that they flowed from the earlier writings of Sr Jean Françoise who wrote extensively on the Spirituality of the Congregation in preparation for the writing of the new Constitutions. Once the new Constitutions were available, sessions were held throughout the Congregation aiding the Sisters to become familiar with them and grow in a deeper awareness of their call within the Church according to the path set out by St Emilie. There is evidence that these two articles were used in this context and thus contributed to *'a path of fidelity for the Congregation, for each Community, for each Sister* (C No.89)

Yes, they were written some 25 years ago but outline some of the essential '*Foundational Words*' that reveal the characteristics of the charism and spirit of St Emilie. They have been recently translated by Sr Bed-Guerda Noël.

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF OUR SPIRITUALITY OF INCARNATION

We begin with the fact that we are apostolic, a fact of which we became clearly aware only after the Second Vatican Council. Until then, we were in fact, in the Church and for the world, one of the Congregations that were called "of active life", as opposed to the Institutes of monastic life. And since, moreover, the Congregations of the "conventual" type were also of "active life", the Church for a long time confused us with the Conventuals and imposed on us ways of living that assimilated us with them. This observation was important in order to begin to situate ourselves.

So we are apostolic!

We are not the only ones who are apostolic. Most of the Congregations that were born like us in the 19th century, are also apostolic. So, in this kind of spirituality, what will be specific to us? What will give us a particular image, our own characteristics?

I would like to make a second remark here:

Immediately after the Council, we began to say that we have an Ignatian spirituality. We have to agree on this statement. Ignatian spirituality is that which Saint Ignatius gave to his companions, it is the Jesuits' spirituality, not ours! It is something else to say that we feel comfortable in Ignatian spirituality. That, yes! And it is not surprising!

First of all, because we are both apostolic. But also, because between Ignatius and Emilie, between what he wanted and what she wanted, between his charisma and hers, there is more than one common and essential point. Among the most important:

The first is that for both, the goal is always the greater glory of God. And a Glory of God that is always linked to the good of the neighbour. The two are united in one and the same project. They also have in common this aim of the most universal good, and this search for God in all things, which makes them both contemplative in action. We therefore have our own spirituality. If we have not dared to say so for a long time, it is because we have not known how to express it in simple and clear terms.

A spirituality, says Father Dhôtel, is defined by three characteristics:

1. It is a way of saying God, and of saying God in terms of experience
2. It is a path for going to God.
3. A spirituality unites a family together around a founding event.

And this is true for us:

A woman, Emilie, had an experience of God

She discovered a path

And this experience she made known,

So that others, first with her, then others after her and still today,
Can live from this experience.
And follow the same path.

That being said, what is specific to us?

Our spirituality is entirely contained in the name that Saint Emilie gave to the Congregation:

Saint Joseph of the Apparition - St. Joseph receiving the announcement of the Incarnation of the Word, so much so that today we no longer hesitate to say that we have an Incarnational spirituality. And we justify it by quoting the passage from Matthew 1:20-24 which inspired Emilie and which we like to say is our Gospel. We also justify it by the goal that Emilie gave to the Congregation:

The Works of Charity,

That is to say, charity put into practice,
The love of God incarnates in the world today,
Through us, through our lives and our actions.

But even here, we do not have a monopoly on this spirituality of the Incarnation. All the Apostolic Congregations can claim this spirituality, because all of them propose to live and actualise in today's world, some or other aspect of the Mystery of Christ.

Let us ask ourselves then:

Which aspect of the whole Mystery of Christ is proper to us?

Between the announcement of the Incarnation of the Word and the return of Jesus to his Father, which moment of the Incarnation is at the origin of the project of founding the Congregation?
For us,

- It is not the Baby Jesus in the manger
- It's not the youth of Jesus either
- Nor is it Christ teaching
- Nor Christ healing the sick
- It is not Christ in his passion
- Nor Christ on the Cross
- Nor the Christ glorious in his Resurrection.

There are Congregations in the Church whose project is to actualise one or other of these moments of the Incarnation in the world today.

For us, it is the Incarnation at its beginning, the very first moment, the first step of God coming

to save humanity. It was this very moment that struck Emilie and which was the starting point of the Congregation.

- It is part of the founding charism,
- It marked the spirit of the Foundress,
- And the Gospel text that relates this moment remains for us a founding text.

Joseph

And then there is JOSEPH. But there too, which Joseph?

Joseph, at what point in his life and in his story?

- It is not the Joseph of the Manger,
- Nor that of the Holy Family,

But the one who receives from the angel, from the messenger of God, the announcement of the Incarnation, Joseph, the first witness of the Incarnation of the Word. It is in this capacity that we honour him particularly in the Congregation (C.92) Joseph, the just man whom God chose to be the intermediary in the realisation of this mystery:

“Joseph, do not be afraid to take Mary into your home... she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people.”

Emilie pondered this revelation to Saint Joseph long and lovingly. And her contemplation of this mystery inspired the foundation of the Congregation and the name she gave it (C.2)

This name should be, for the entire Congregation and for each Sister, as a reminder, an invitation to follow Saint Joseph's example in unceasingly welcoming the ever new revelation of God's love in our lives. (C.6). To welcome this love in order to proclaim it in turn (to all people). All our spirituality is there!

Saint Emilie's Contemplation

And now, since our spirituality lies in what Emilie contemplated of the Mystery of God's Love, let us try, with what we know of her, to see, to imagine what she saw through this painting of the apparition of the angel to Joseph.

"The angel of the Lord appears to Joseph"

It is God who intervenes. God takes the initiative to communicate to humanity the astonishing news of his plan of Incarnation. And it is to Joseph that he makes this revelation. In Emilie's life, in her personal life and in her apostolic life, God will always take the initiative. He will always act first. She will only second him. She wants only to be "the instrument" of God.

And Joseph welcomes this revelation.

Did he try to understand? Did he ask himself questions? The Gospel does not say it, but personally, I think so, just like Mary who wanted to understand! But Mary had questioned the

angel. And after the angel had answered her question, she welcomed the mystery by speaking again:

"Let it be done in me according to what you have just said!"

Joseph, however, said nothing. He welcomed without speaking. He welcomed in silence. But he acts. His response is a concrete response, an active response:

"He took Mary as his wife."

And the Gospel then shows us Joseph actually collaborating effectively in the realisation of the Incarnation. From now on, everything Joseph does will be linked to the Incarnation. He will allow God's plan to be fulfilled in time:

He goes up to Bethlehem with Mary for the census,

When Jesus is born, he gives him a name, as the angel had told him,

He takes him to Jerusalem to present him in the Temple as the law requires

He flees to Egypt because Jesus is in danger,

And when the danger is over, he returns to Nazareth.

He collaborates in the realisation of the Incarnation, always in docility to the will of God. It is not he who draws up his program, who plans his itinerary. Because he is at the service of the Work of God, he lets himself be guided by God. In all circumstances, Emilie will not act otherwise.

Then, after the episode of the Temple and of Jesus speaking with the doctors of the law, the Gospel says (Luke 2, 51-52):

"He (Jesus) came down with them (Joseph and Mary). He grew in wisdom and stature and in grace before God and before men."

Then nothing more of Joseph. He disappears from the Gospel. Jesus is twelve years old. According to Jewish law, he is no longer a child, he enters the adult world. As long as Jesus needed him, Joseph was there. In the Temple, Jesus acted as an adult. He took his responsibilities. He said and he showed that the time had come for him to attend to his Father's business. So, Joseph withdrew, he faded away, he disappeared.

Of course, he had to continue his role as father and head of the family, but his role in the Incarnation of the Word, he will continue in the shadows. Mary, we will see her during the ministry of Jesus, we will see her again at the foot of the Cross. And after the death of Jesus. And after the Resurrection. Her role in the Incarnation was not finished. The Church had to be born. And Mary had to be present at the birth of the Church and at its beginnings. But for Joseph, whose role was to accompany Jesus in his childhood and the first years of his adolescence, it was finished!

All this is the theological foundation of our spirituality, its origin, its starting point in God. The Incarnation, as we can see, has a central place in it. In our Constitutions, several texts tell us this and show it well. But what they also tell us, are the implications of such a spirituality in

our daily life: what convictions must inhabit us, what conversion must take place in our mentalities, our attitudes, our behaviour, so that our actions today are an "incarnation of the love of God."

Some attitudes required

I will dwell on some of these attitudes that must be ours, mine, quite simply because I am a Sister of Saint Joseph, called to make present today the love of God incarnate.

1. Because the Congregation is *called to enter into the movement of the Incarnation of the Son of God*" (C.3 and 60), it is irreversibly involved in this movement. It is its vocation and mission and therefore the vocation and mission of each one of us. Therefore, I can say in all truth that, by the very fact that my action is part of the mission of the Congregation, I participate directly, I truly collaborate, in the Incarnation of the Son of God today.
2. Because the Congregation is, by vocation, *"a living sign today of the love of God which is incarnate"* (C.4), Therefore, wherever it is present, *it bears witness to the infinite tenderness of the Father for humanity*" (C.4),

Everything I do, my actions, my work whatever it may be, is supposed to say God, to say that He is Love. My words and my actions are called to be a revelation of God and his love of the Father and his tenderness for all people.

It was once said that the Congregation should be a living ex-voto of the Mystery of the Incarnation. Today we speak rather of a sign of God's love. But the meaning is the same. What is an ex-voto, if not the reminder, the sign and the actualisation today of an event of the past, here, the Incarnation of the Son of God?

This is precisely what the Article 4 of the Constitutions expresses:

The Congregation is a living sign today of the love of God which is incarnated and reaches all people through human gestures.

3. Because God became incarnate for all humanity the Congregation:
 - *wants to bear witness to God's love for all people, without distinction of religion, race or social condition*" (C.12),
 - *is "called to extend itself to all parts of the world",*
 - *"embraces all works of charity"* (C.11),
 - *"is open to all forms of the apostolate"* (C.4 and 5)
 - *"the mission abroad"* (foreign mission) is part of its charism,

Therefore, wherever I am, whatever I do, I must do it in a universal spirit, *with a heart open to the whole world* (cf. C.187)

4. Because God became incarnate for all, where...
 - the poor, the small, the weak, are always his preference,

- the Son of God, by His Incarnation, identified himself with the poor, the stranger, the refugee,
- the Congregation "*must announce the Good News of the Kingdom to the poor* " (C.5)
- "*serving the poor is an integral part of its apostolic vocation*" (C.5)

The poor, then, must not only be present in my life, but I must reserve a privileged place for them. I must look around me, at my side, in my environment, in my field of activity, and see who are "the poor" for me. And if their presence is not obvious, I must look for them, discover them, because they are there!

5. Because Incarnation, Love, Charity, are also Justice, Liberation and Development of the human person.

- The Congregation wants to be "*particularly attentive to the cries of peoples whose fundamental rights are ignored or despised*" (C.5),
- "*In the spirit of the Gospel, it wants to fight against poverty and every form of injustice*" (C.5),
- "*The Sisters must be happy to collaborate with all those who, in the spirit of the Gospel, work for justice and the good of mankind*" (C.95).

Then I have the duty to question what I do, personally, and in solidarity with others, so that there may be a little more justice, a little more fraternity, a little more solidarity, in the world and especially around me.

6. Because God, by becoming incarnate, came to restore humanity to their dignity, greatness and the sacredness as a child of God. The Congregation...

- "*by showing to the people the love with which each one is loved, reveals to them the greatness of the vocation to which they are all called*" (C.4),
- "*everything we do for one or another of our brothers and sisters must be able to help them grow, to become themselves, and to awaken in them the call to love others*" (C.10)

7. Because the Son of God comes to us to fulfil the Father's plan. He does not do his own work, but the work of the Father. In the Congregation, "the Sisters, animated by the love of God, strive to accomplish his work.

- "*They seek to enter into his view, to assist him in his plans*" (C.9)

As this is the case, I often have to ask myself this question (Sheet OR.4) invites us all to do so:

In my actions, in my various actions, are these works that I do, done for God,

or is it God's work that I am called to do with others?

The question is important. And my answer is also important. Because, ultimately, it depends on me, it depends on each one of us, whether or not the Congregation does the work of Incarnation in the world today. And since "Doing the work of Incarnation" is the vocation and mission of the Congregation, I, for my part, am responsible, for the fidelity of the Congregation to its vocation, and to its mission today.

OUR CHARISM TODAY

Sister Christilla Blanchard (1923-2014)

In order to speak about our charism today, I would like to draw on some powerful words of Saint Emilie. Powerful, in the sense that we find there something of the inspiration at the origin of the Congregation; the foundation on which the Congregation was built. And in this sense we are able say that these are foundational words. Powerful also because these words reveal to us the characteristics of the charism and the spirit of Emilie. And they reveal this to us because we are bearers of them, today as in the time when St. Emilie said or wrote them.

Having said that, I would like to make another remark about the charism: what you said (this morning) about the action of Emilie de Vialar and what you said (yesterday) about your own action, what I said (yesterday) about spirituality and what I am going to say today about the charism, all of this must be consistent. When we talk about the charism, there cannot be strong contradictions between us, between what each of us says. Why? Because the charism, this unique grace that God gave to Emilie de Vialar, He gave it to her for her and for us. It is the same grace that she received that lives in each one of us today.

The difference between her and us is that for her it was a grace of foundation, of beginning, to inaugurate the mission. It was from this charism that the Congregation was born. For her it had a spirit, a particular face, its own identity. It was something new that was born in the Church. For us, this charism is a grace of vocation. But it is the same grace, a grace of the same nature. It is the same charism that lives in us today. And it is through us that it is kept alive and perpetuated:

"After me," said St. Emilie, "the Sisters will perpetuate the spirit that God has given me."

And it is He who makes us act today "in the manner of Emilie", in a world that is certainly very different from the one in which she lived. But the charism does not age, it is always current always new. The words of Emilie that I would like to quote first, are those in which she speaks of its spirit.

"The spirit of this Congregation is to dedicate the Sisters to the exercise of the different works of Charity."

And she says elsewhere that she wishes to:

"found a Congregation which unites in itself all the various works of Charity which are to be found scattered throughout existing Orders."

All Works of Charity

All without exception. Emilie did not choose. She did not set limits for herself. The only limits to her action were those imposed by circumstances. But she accepted these limits willingly, in faith, with humility and simplicity, and even with joy, receiving them as *signs* of God's will. In this we recognize the characteristics of the charism.

But what she positively wanted, what she chose for her Congregation, is the universality of service, apostolic service in its diversity. The universality of service, and not the universality of services. We do not have to do everything, nor respond to all calls, to all needs; we have to be available to respond to every call, to every need, to be at the service of all.

The motto, "Devotedness unto death," which does not come from St. Emilie, but which goes back to the origins of the Congregation, says even more about the universality and diversity of the service I speak of. It goes beyond that; it expresses in a very strong way the absolute in service. It is the service that goes to the end of love, to the end of giving oneself, and if necessary, to death.

This motto reflects one of the important characteristics of the charism. And if our first sisters chose it, it is undoubtedly because it is a good translation of the spirit that animated them at that time:

- Love, charity, must be the soul, the inner source of our actions,
- And a love that knows no limits,
- Our dedication, the gift of ourselves to others, must also know no limits; *to give ourselves without counting the cost* and to the end. Like Christ.

"To give oneself", is it not to repeat the human gestures of Christ, gestures of God's tenderness for humanity? The motto adds *"and die"*, because *dying*, as for Christ, is the culmination, the ultimate phase of love. It is no different for us today: Any activity in favour of one's neighbour, whatever it may be, is a work of charity if it is animated by this spirit that animated St. Emilie.

The Works of Charity

This is the goal she gave to the Congregation. And that goal has not changed. And it will not change: it will always be to proclaim, through what we are and what we do, that GOD is LOVE. What has changed is the world in which these works of charity are carried out. It has changed and continues to change. What has also changed is the name "Works of Charity". For Emilie, the works of charity meant: the work of education in all its forms. And all the works of mercy. Today we speak more of evangelization.

- Direct or explicit evangelization: and it is the ministry, the service, in all its forms, of the Word.
- Indirect or implicit evangelization: and this is all that is involved in an action.

But... Works of charity or evangelization, it is the same reality: Our action is evangelization as it is a work of charity if it proclaims, implicitly or explicitly, that GOD is LOVE.

But if for Emilie every action, every word, every gesture in favour of the neighbor is a work of charity, if it announces, if it proclaims by all that it says and does, that God is Love, it is because she herself is imbued with this love. This love is in her like a fire that burns, that animates her and stirs her to action. And if this fire would cease to burn in her, then, as she herself says, she would no longer be able to do anything.

The same is true for us today. And it will always be so: for my word and my action to be evangelization, proclamation of the Love of God, for them to be the charity of God that I put into practice today, I must be imbued by this Love, so that it becomes the principle, the source and the motor of my life and my action. Filled with this charity, I will then be able to accomplish its works. But in order to be imbued and moved by this Love, I must contemplate it in its source which is God. As did St. Emilie.

And this brings me to a second great quote from Emilie:

"For the Sisters to have this same spirit as their own, this spirit 'that animates their action and gives movement to all their conduct, they must meditate every day on the immense love of God for humanity.'"

Meditation and Contemplation on the Love of God for humanity

Meditate on this love, contemplate it, so that this love enters into my being and into my life, it is the attitude of interiority of the charism and of our apostolic life.

Emilie spoke of a spirit of recollection which she said must be as "*the soul of this Congregation*". Today we speak of 'interiority'.

But it is exactly the same. The content of these two terms is the same, so much so that I am sure that Emilie, today, would not give the Congregation a different direction than the one given by the General Chapter of 1989. After the General Chapter of 1983, which had emphasized our apostolic action as a sign of God's love for humanity, she (Emilie) would also have emphasized the other aspect of our apostolic life, "interiority", as the source and foundation of our action.

"Meditate, contemplate this immense love of God for humanity"

I would like to dwell for a few moments on this urgent invitation of St. Emilie to contemplate this immense love of God and to say what I see in it as concrete implications for my life:

The first is this: to tell us of his love, God came to us. He did not make man rise up to him, he did not draw him into another world, he came down. The movement of the Incarnation of God is a vertical movement, from the above to the below, a downward movement to reach humanity.

And because God did not hesitate to come down to man, this movement from me towards the other must be natural for me; it must be natural for me to move, to come out of myself to join the other. In this sense, there can be no question, for me, of claiming rights to assert over the other. It is always up to me to take the first step, to initiate dialogue, to build a bridge, to restore a broken relationship.

It is true that this is a simple Christian approach. But if the spirit of simplicity and humility, the spirit of fraternity and service are, as we say, characteristics of our charism, so this Christian approach must be, or become "connatural" for us, it must become a reflex for us. Meditating on this love also teaches me that in coming to us, God did not remain outside of us. He came to meet man at his deepest, heaviest point in his humanity, with all his fragility and all his heaviness. He made himself like us.

And because God was not afraid to demean himself to come in the flesh, to invest himself in humanity. And because I myself am embarked on this movement of incarnation, because I extend it and, in some way, give it an actuality, I too must strip myself of everything that does not help me to better encounter the other.

- I have to leave aside, or at least to discern, everything that does not constitute my essential identity, my particular ways of thinking, speaking, and living.
- I have to make myself free and available.
- Because all that matters is the message to be transmitted, the Good News to be "expressed," and the one who will receive it, I have to make myself interiorly poor.

This is a requirement of inculturation, which is much talked about today and which can be defined as the incarnation, the rooting of the Good News in one's own culture: so that the Gospel becomes "leaven of life" for the people, for the environment to which I am sent and to which I am always sent! This Gospel must not fall "alongside life", nor "hover" above it, it must penetrate, it must be incarnated in the values of the culture of the other, it must "inform" it from within. It must reach what is good and true in the mentality, in the thought, in the heart of the other, in order to renew it from within, to impregnate it with the Gospel. This is inculturation.

A 3rd word from St. Emilie is one that defines the aim of the Congregation:

"Do not lose sight of the goal for which we are united: God and his greater glory, the service of our neighbor and the ardent desire to be useful for him."

And elsewhere:

"The Congregation is established only for the glory of God and the good of our neighbor."

The Glory of God

The glory of God holds an important place in Emilie's life (as did praise and thanksgiving). For her, everything is ordered to the glory, to the greater glory of God (her writings are punctuated with this expression). And she wanted it to be the same for the Congregation:

"Let us never have in our hearts anything but the desire to work for His greater glory."

But for Emilie, the glory of God is very often linked to the good of the neighbor. For her, to serve one's neighbor is to give glory to God:

"I rejoice in the good that is done through you. Do all for the glory of the Lord."

"May my Sisters work as much as possible for the glory of the Lord and the good of our neighbour."

The Good of the Neighbour

Today, Emilie would speak of human development, as a service to all whereby one becomes more human, free, responsible, creative, and artisan of one's own growth. Elsewhere, Emilie speaks of the good of the neighbour, specifying the spiritual and physical good of all persons.

Today she would speak of an integral development, as a service that reveals and makes one aware of their own capacities, gifts, richness, value, and dignity as a human person and child of God. A service that encourages one to take responsibility for oneself which helps to develop these values and riches in oneself.

This is what "development" is. And it concerns me personally. It is not only achieved on a global scale, or on the scale of this or that underdeveloped country. It is within my reach, and I am asked to work on it, to my capabilities, but effectively, in my field of activity.

So, only the terms have changed, and they will continue to change. But the reality remains for us as it was for Emilie, which is that the Congregation, in all the countries where it is present, is there only *to work for the good of the neighbour*. In this way *it advances the Kingdom of God and brings glory to God*. This is its vocation and mission.

And this service to one's neighbour, Emilie wanted to be universal. For Emilie, the neighbour is every human being, the one who is near and the one who is far away, the one who calls, the one who asks and the one who does not dare to ask, all are neighbours. This universality is part of the charism. No one is excluded. But there are privileged people. And they are the poor. They have; they must always have priority.

Today, the poor still exist, but their names are very different: there are the poor of always, but there are also others who have appeared more recently, but whose number continues to grow: refugees, immigrants, isolated elderly people, racial or other unrecognized minorities, the marginalized, all those whom society does not recognize, those whom it ignores and those whom it rejects. All these poor people are our neighbours today. And they are at our doors!

“The good to do”

This is also mentioned in another of Emilie's words that we like to quote and often use as a sending word:

“Go! and with what you have and will receive, do all the good you can”

It is with this word that I will stop now. And it will be the last.

"Go ! ..." St. Emilie would still tell us today.

To do this good, go out from your home and from yourself and go to this world that needs you! Don't settle down, don't lock yourself into your habits, leave your securities and go! set out on the road, go forward with courage. Don't be afraid! What need you fear?

Go to meet the other, go to the one who needs you, the one who is waiting for someone to come, to help him, to listen to him, or maybe just to say a word of hope... Go to the one you see and hear because he cries out his need, his hunger for bread, his thirst for justice.

But also go to the one you have to discover because his need is not seen or his voice is too weak to be heard. Open your eyes and listen carefully, because you risk passing by without seeing them, without hearing them! For some, know that the greater their needs, the more they hide, but they are there, you have to find them. And there are many of them! And time is running out! Don't waste time!

"With what you have and will receive..."

What you have is not yours, it is for others. So, give! You have little? Share the "little" you have!

And then count on Providence! Trust Him! You know well that it has never failed me! it will help you too.

With the means you have, let your service be generous, disinterested! Do not calculate! Give freely!

Be united among yourselves and in solidarity with all those who seek to bring a little more justice and a little less suffering to the world around you.

"Do all the good you can."

That is my only instruction! And I am not giving you a method. I am simply sending you. It is up for you to see there where you are, what you can do. The main thing is that you do all you can. Do not forget that the Kingdom of God is our only goal and the rest is secondary.

If you cannot do all the good you would like to do, accept it with humility, knowing that God does not lack the means to accomplish His work. Be prudent, of course, but do not let your prudence keep you from being bold. Be creative. Be inventive!

Let charity be your only criterion! Because it is ingenious, charity will make you perceive the need. It will also make you discern what good will be most useful to your neighbour. And it will make you find the appropriate means. It will also inspire you with a way, a way that always respects the person of your neighbour, his freedom, his human dignity. May your compassion for those who suffer never fade!

Be flexible to adapt to circumstances and situations. Be attentive to the signs of God's presence in the world and of his will for you. And be available! Know how to discern the Spirit of the Lord at work in the events of our world. Connect with each other and with others to give yourselves the means that will make your service for the Kingdom more effective. There is not much we can do alone today!

And when the time comes to step aside to make way for others, do it humbly, simply, and with joy, knowing that the good you have done will be carried on by others. For you, the time will have come to move from a life perhaps overflowing with activity to a more contemplative life. Your apostolic service will continue, certainly, but in a new form, that of prayer, perhaps even of sickness or infirmity.

But until then, work with courage and hope! Do not be discouraged by difficulties. I have also experienced great difficulties, but I can assure you that the Lord is always there to support us. And this assurance must be enough for us and fill our hearts with happiness!

Sister Christilla Blanchard (1923-2014)