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**Prot. MG 61/24**

*Born from above*

**Dearest Sisters,**

I am writing to you on a day which is so dear to us, the day dedicated to Mary, Mother of Divine Providence. From February 11<sup>th</sup> to today we have lived the Orionine Marian Year, a year of grace for the whole Orionine Charismatic Family. In the prayer that we have been addressing throughout all this year to Mary, *Mater Dei* and our Mother, we have been trustfully asking: “Come and take care of us. Here you are, take the key of our heart: come to govern and protect us... give us a great and magnanimous heart... watch over the steps of our life” and we have felt that She truly takes care of us and accompanies us with her faithful love, because she wants us to always be docile to the Holy Spirit and to realize everything that is in God’s plan for the good of humanity, like she did.

Let us continue our journey of life always with Mary: “*Mary is with us if we put all our trust in her maternal heart: and if Mary is with us, what shall we fear? If Mary is with us, we are certain of the salvation of our souls...*” (DO, *Writings*, 91,184).

*To live Christ, with Mary, and to make the whole world live of Christ!* This year’s Advent is a favourable occasion to realize this deep desire of the heart. Don Orione wrote: “*Christmas invites us to live piously, awaiting that blessed hope that will be the glorious appearance of Christ. We must renew ourselves in the depths of our spirit: Jesus Christ must be mystically reborn in our faith and love: at His feet the shepherds laid their lambs, and the Kings offered gold, incense and myrrh, - what will we be offering?*” (*Writings*, 81,307).

Advent is the time of renewal, of birth from above, from the Spirit. True Christmas is when we allow Jesus to be “*mystically reborn in our faith and love*”. This could be our gift to Jesus, our commitment.

When we light the candle in the Advent wreath, we remember the commitment we have made to offer – with Mary – the gift to the Lord Jesus who was, who is and who is to come.

### 1. “*Your redemption is drawing near*”

The Gospel of the first Sunday of Advent speaks of the upheaval of heaven and earth and of the great fear that is killing people. Jesus says to his disciples: “When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near”. But he adds the condition to keep calm in the midst of the trial: “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing... Be always on the watch, and pray...” (cf. *Lk* 21:25-36). Be careful, be present, pray and be vigilant.

“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path” (*Ps* 119:105) wrote the psalmist from his own experience. For St. Paul, however, the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit (cf. *Ef* 6.17) to combat *carousing* that creep in without us realizing and that weigh us down on our path. The Holy Spirit uses the Word as a tool to combat worldliness that is contrary to the style of the Gospel. Let us look at the Virgin Mary, She who “treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart” (*Lk* 2:19).

In this first week of Advent, let us learn from Mary the ability to be silent, to **MEDITATE** the Word and events, to discover the presence of the Lord among us. And if we notice that our meditation is lacking, if we are distracted and not attentive, we can always regain concentration, live the grateful awareness of the present moment and open ourselves a little more to the Word that illuminates us, to be a word of light and hope for others.

## 2. *“The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you”*

This year, on the second Sunday of Advent, we will celebrate the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Let us contemplate Her who was full of grace, all pure, upright, free, beautiful, because in Her humility She abandoned Herself to God, She said YES to His plan of salvation. Even if She did not understand everything, She let Herself be “overshadowed” (*Lk* 1:35) and She became the *Mater Dei*, crushing the head of the eternal enemy (cf. *Gen* 3:15).

Mary teaches us docility to the grace of God. She shows us the path of integrity, that is, to act in coherence with what I think, say and do to respond to our vocation to “be holy and blameless in love” (*Eph* 1:4).

This Sunday normally reports the vocation of John the Baptist “a voice of one calling in the wilderness: Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him” (*Mk* 1:3). The Baptist points to Jesus and encourages conversion, to die to our old self and to be born from above, from the Spirit; the Virgin Mary teaches us openness, availability and being in relationship. In the Byzantine Christian context these two figures are represented in an icon called “*deisis*” (from the Greek, “supplication”, “intercession”): the blessing Jesus Christ between the Virgin Mary and Saint John the Baptist: these latter turn to Christ in an act of prayer and supplication.

In this second week of Advent we want to learn from them to centre ourselves in Jesus, to grow in integrity and charity and to **INTERCEDE**, like them, for our world deprived of peace, for people, for the Church and her wounds. By lighting this candle, may our supplication rise to the Heart of Jesus and may the power of his love descend upon all of us and renew us.

## 3. *Rejoice in the Lord always!*

On the third Sunday of Advent called “Gaudete” we experience the joy of salvation: “Do not fear, Zion (*put your name*); do not let your hands hang limp. The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing” (*Zeph* 3:16-17). Christmas is an encounter that fills us with joy, an encounter with God and men. It is God himself who seeks us, who wants this encounter, who wants to renew us, and seeing us abandoned to his love “he will rejoice over us with singing!”.

“I received from my God excessive graces of his Love, and I felt moved by the desire to respond to some of them and to respond with love for love”, wrote St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. Pope Francis quotes her in the Encyclical “*Dilexit nos*” (166-167) and concludes: “We need once more to take up the Word of God and to realize, in doing so, that our best response to the love of Christ’s heart is to love our brothers and sisters. There is no greater way for us to return love for love. The Scriptures make this patently clear: ‘Just as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me’” (*Mt* 25:40).

This is the true joy that Don Orione speaks of: “*Perfect joy can only be found in perfect dedication of oneself to God and to men, to all men, to the most miserable as well as to the most physically and morally deformed, to the most distant, the smallest, the most guilty, the most adverse*” (*Writings*, 105,200).

In the Gospel of the third Sunday of Advent, the crowds who came to be baptized asked John: “What should we do then?”. The tax collectors and the soldiers also asked the same (*Lk* 3:10-18). Let us also ask during this time... and let us be generous in our response, because that is where our “perfect joy” is.

It is in this week that the Christmas Novena begins, a more intense spiritual journey that leads us to welcome joyfully the Lord Jesus, the Emmanuel, God-with-us, who “will baptize us with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Lk 3:16). In this time, we are more exposed to the frenetic desire that the world usually lives, with the temptation not to go forward than the outward appearance of feasts, forgetting about the Celebrated One. As we light the third candle of the wreath, we want to offer Jesus the gift of **MEETING** Himself in the Word, in the sacraments, in the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and in the sister and brother in whom he lives.

#### 4. *“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!”*

We are at the gates of Christmas! Joy and anxiety are mixed together. We experience the perception of accelerated time, it seems that everything goes quickly, and we cannot arrive on time, we are in delay with so many things, even with our inner process. And we feel that this anxiety also takes away the joy of the encounter, because we are tired and there is always something to do!

Instead, the Virgin Mary, on this fourth Sunday of Advent, teaches us that, yes, it is necessary to set out on a journey, and go “in haste”, but as Pope Francis told us at the end of the XII<sup>th</sup> General Chapter: “not the hastiness of the world, but that of God”. And he invited us to “proclaim to today’s men and women that God is love and can fill the heart of those who seek Him and who let themselves be encountered by Him”. How relevant this invitation is today, when so many people are not aware of the meaning of life and live as if God did not exist!

Don Orione had a strong experience of God’s unconditional love and authoritatively asked us: *“May our hope in God have no limits: we can, we must hope for everything from God, in humility and with a great love. God is the great, good, heavenly Father who can and wants to give us everything, as long as we love Him, in simplicity and abandonment, like children”* (Writings, 66,382).

Now it is up to us to experience this abandonment in God, like children; to invoke the Holy Spirit so that He may be our **LIGHT** in the pilgrimage of life. In the bull of the Jubilee 2025 we read: “By his perennial presence in the life of the pilgrim Church, the Holy Spirit illumines all believers with the light of hope. He keeps that light burning, like an ever-burning lamp, to sustain and invigorate our lives. Christian hope does not deceive or disappoint because it is grounded in the certainty that nothing and no one may ever separate us from God’s love: ‘Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or the sword? (...) No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us’. (Rom 8:35.37-39)”.

Now, the last gift that we want to offer to Jesus this Christmas is to **HOPE** and to infuse hope in the discouraged.

The Holy Door of the Jubilee will open for all of us this Christmas. Jesus says: “I am the door” (Jn 10:7). His Heart is the door! Together with all the People of God, let us enter this door as *pilgrims of hope* and offer Him our whole life so that it may be renewed and transformed for others.

Have a good Advent journey together with Mary Immaculate, Mother of God, and Merry Christmas full of Hope!

Together with the Sisters of the Council, I greet you with love!



Sr M. Alicja Kędziora  
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Superior general

Rome, November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
*Mother of Divine Providence*