

THE SEVEN WORDS

Humanity
Relationship
Presence
Compassion
Sacrament
Eucharist
Contemplation



AND THE
WORD
WAS MADE
FLESH
AND LIVED
AMONG US

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CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF THE INCARNATE WORD

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THE SEVEN WORDS

INTRODUCTION

The Congregational Formation Team is happy to share the fruit of its prayer and reflection concerning the spirituality of the Incarnation. For the past few years we worked on the process of initial and ongoing formation of the congregation. This experience called us to reflect deeply on the meaning of spirituality in formation.

From our reflection, grounded in our personal experience in the contemporary reality in which we live, seven words emerged: Humanity, Relationship, Presence, Compassion, Sacrament, Eucharist and Contemplation. These words form a framework for CCVI incarnational spirituality today.

We offer this to you for prayer and reflection. We invite people of all forms of commitment to reflect and share on the contents. We invite you to walk together and allow the Incarnate Word to renew us:

- The Word is HUMANITY and calls us to welcome human fragility.
- The Word is RELATIONSHIP and calls us to communion.
- The Word is PRESENCE and calls us to welcome Him in others.
- The Word is COMPASSION and calls us to feel the pain in others.
- The Word is SACRAMENT and calls us to be prophetic signs of His love
- The Word is EUCHARIST and calls us to be the bread of life for others.
- The Word is CONTEMPLATION and calls us to look at our world with new eyes.

Humanity

The WORD is HUMAN and calls us to welcome human fragility.

We are created in the image and likeness of God and called to live in harmony in relationship to God, self and all of creation. This relationship is broken when sin enters and the harmonious balance is disrupted. The Incarnate Word assumed a human form and reestablished communion between God and creation (*Puebla, No. 188*).

As we contemplate reality in the third millennium, we are challenged by war, international conflicts, genocide, ethnic cleansing, and other conditions that destroy families and countries, displace people and generate hunger and sickness (*John Paul II, Speech of January 2000*). This reality ignores human dignity and denies faith in the Incarnate God, who became one of us to save us all. The Gospel clearly illustrates that God wants a relationship with us. However, we choose death instead of life. Our history has not been one of salvation, but many times of condemnation, violence and death.

THE CALL

Today, we are called to contemplate the Incarnate Word, and as Christians and consecrated women to reverence, honor and value the person:

Whoever works to discover the Incarnate Word welcomes the poor and shares and practices justice. Those who have put on Christ give their lives as Jesus did.
(See 1 John 1-5.)

In our foundational letter, Monsignor Claude Marie Dubuis wrote to Mother Marie Angélique: *“He begs you to accept the mission of corporal works of mercy, by sending sisters to take charge of our hospitals and orphan asylums”* (September 21, 1866).

Our Constitutions call us to live our humanity fully:

“We strive to be caring, forgiving and affirming in all our relationships. Our sense of mission, our ability to relate to people and their personal friendships aid a meaningful life of consecrated celibacy” (*Constitutions, Art. 9*).

“From the love of the Incarnate Word for them, the sisters draw strength to accept each other’s limitations, to be reconciled with each other and to be a sign of reconciliation for others” (*Constitutions, Art. 28.4*).

In our General Chapter 2002 we committed to: “Recognize the need for conversion, reconciliation and healing, assuming our personal responsibility of past wounds and to get to the root of our fears, personal defenses...with an open heart, developing attitudes of nonviolence in our relationships (*Acts, p. 15*).



In our General Chapter 2002 we committed to: “Recognize the need for conversion, reconciliation and healing, assuming our personal responsibility of past wounds and to get to the root of our fears, personal defenses...with an open heart, developing attitudes of nonviolence in our relationships (*Acts, p. 15*).

Sacred scripture speaks to us of God through Jesus:

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (*Luke 2:52*).

“Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (*Philippians 2:6-7*).

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power of man be of God, and not of us” (*2 Cor. 4:7*).

• **Reflection:**

Prayer

*Oh Mary, dawn of the new world,
 Mother of the living, in you we trust our cause of life:
 Look, Mother, at the immense number
 of children who are prevented from being born,
 the poor who have difficulties living,
 women and men who are victims
 of violence and inhumanity,
 the elderly and the sick who have died
 because of indifference
 or a make-believe piety.
 Make those who believe in your son
 learn to announce the Gospel of life
 with firmness and love to
 the persons of our time.*

*Give them the grace to welcome it
 as an ever-new gift and
 give them the happiness of celebrating
 with gratitude their whole existence
 and the courage to give testimony
 with faith, so that together
 We may build with all the persons
 of good will, a civilization of truth and love,
 for the praise and glory of our Creator God,
 who is a lover of life. Amen.*

(Paul II, Evangelium Vitae)

Bibliography

Go to Meet God, Chapter VIII, *The Scandal of Mortal Flesh*. Benjamín Bueltá, SJ. *The Following of Christ*, Chapter II, *The Face of Jesus*. Second Galilee. *Fully Human, Completely Alive*, Chapter I, *A Picture of a Human Being Fully Alive*. John Powell, SJ.

Relationship

The WORD is RELATIONSHIP and calls us into communion.

The Trinity is the source and model of relationships. Through the relationship I–You, we are transformed as we experience the paschal mystery. Our relationships consist of four: with God, with self, with others and with all creation. The assumed relationships are expressed and recreated, and need to be a strong impulse of new life as we live the Incarnation to which we are called:

- “Every human being becomes conscious of his/her dignity and becomes aware of his/her own value as a human being only through a relationship with others and he/she does this in a special way when another human being values him/her as a person, in other words by showing love” (*Botitiglione, R*).
- “I am as a likeness to the Trinity, I participate in God’s life in the measure that I maintain a relationship with ‘You’ my neighbor” (*Juan Villegas, JS. Spirituality of the RR.HH*).

Relationships are broken by disintegration of families, unemployment, intolerance, war, dehumanization and failure to communicate, as well as destruction of the cosmos. Realities that we encounter in relationships are:

- In a relationship to self, it is difficult for us to find our “I” through silence. In the I-YOU relationship, we grow in self-knowledge and awareness.
- Our relationships, modeled on the Trinity, reveal unity, interrelation, and communication.

CONGREGATIONAL HISTORY AND DOCUMENTS

Monsignor Dubuis and His Relationships

Monsignor Dubuis loved and he inspired us to love him:

- He asked that members of the congregation: “Show great kindness to all from your heart and also serenity in your face, instead of looking like those dried up lands...” (*Constitutions, 1874*).
- He communicated with his family, his friends, and those in need. His response to the needs of the people of Texas was to get help. The Indians called him “Great Chief of the Spirits” (*Texas Apostle, pages 55, 81, 85*).



Mother St. Pierre's Communications

Mother St. Pierre communicated personally and maintained multiple relationships with bishops, sisters and others. (See *Mother St. Pierre's Letters, Volumes I-III.*)

- “On the other hand, our most intimate and deep sufferings are related to persons who have moved our hearts to love and respect them” (*Volume I, page 6*).
- “Therefore, be careful not to be weak because you want to be good” (*Volume 1, page 14*).
Reference pages: Volume I, pages 3, 6, 14, 22, 55

Relationships in the Constitutions

- “...their sense of mission, their ability to relate to people and their personal friendships aid a meaningful life of consecrated celibacy” (*Art. 9*)
- “...by giving generously and unselfishly their personal qualities, talents, and material goods...” (*Art. 13*)
- “...acknowledging all creation as God’s gift...” (*Art. 16*)
- “...through their obedience they promote unity with each other...” (*Art. 23*)
- “With acceptance and awareness, the sisters strive to live in unity of heart with respect for individual differences.” (*Art. 26*)
Additional articles: 28, 28.1, 39.1, 42.1

Chapter 2002

We affirm the statement about relationships made in Chapter 2002. (*See Relationships, pages 15-16.*)

- *Personal transformation
- *Enthusiasm for mission
- *Deepen our relationships among provinces, region and different forms of commitment

Scripture

We are enlightened by God’s Word in relationships, which heightens our awareness of God’s Kingdom among us:

- “For where two or three are gathered together in my name...” (*Matthew 18:20*)
- “...that they may be one as we are one...” (*John 17:11*)
- “...live in intimate communion with the Father...” (*John 1:18*)

Jesus modeled relationships. Some examples are:

- The Samaritan women (*John 9, 1-41*)
- Martha and Mary (*Luke 10, 38-42*)
- Let the children come to me... (*Mark 10, 13-16*)
- The man born blind... (*John 9, 1-41*)
- The paralyzed man (*Mark 2, 1-28*)

Celebrating the Gift of Relationships

Prayer

God, full of grace, community of love, three in one: unite all your children, make us into one family related by love, united with you and creation so that we can enter into the fullness of life. Amen.

• Reflection:

Presence

The WORD is PRESENCE and calls us to be presence for others.

The words “presence” and “person” are intimately connected. “Person” comes from the Latin “per-sonate,” which means “firm sound”—in other words, making one present. We are called to be “presence” for each other in authenticity and transparency.

Our presence connects all creation. Being connected implies an awareness of our thought processes, actions and our essence. Presence suggests attentiveness to the rhythms and nuances of self and others and calls us to respond, allowing God to transform us.

Presence is sacramental; Jesus is a presence to be captured and acted upon. We are present in the world through our senses. God becomes present to us through our senses. The mystery of the Incarnation is God being present to human beings in a visible and tangible way.

The birthing word “presence” invites us to be an authentic presence, which calls us to own our femininity. The absence of the feminine results in dehumanization and failure to use gifts such as creativity, a sense of beauty, refinement, sensitivity and intuition.

CONGREGATIONAL ORIGINS

*In the origins of our
Congregation we discover
the deep presence
of our spiritual Mother
Jeanne Chezard de Matel,
our founder Monsignor
Claude Marie Dubuis
and our first sisters:*

- “Jeanne full of the spirit of the Word-made-flesh became the bread of compassion, simplicity, love, justice, mercy and peace—the presence of God” (*Sr. Nancy Lee Smith, IHM*).
- Monsignor Dubuis traveled through his enormous diocese to be the presence of the Incarnate Word in the midst of a people who suffered the devastation caused by civil war, cholera, yellow fever, orphanhood, and widowhood. “One afternoon as he was traveling alone, according to his custom, through the vast areas of his lonely dioceses to encourage and fortify his courageous Mexicans... (*Perrichón, page 216*). “The presence of his spirit, his daring and trust in God... one day as he was going to Camp Danis to comfort and give instruction to the poor Irish soldiers...” (*Perrichón, page 218*).
- The presence of Mother Pierre is summarized in her own words: “My mind and my heart only have two stations: the Tabernacle and our convent in San Antonio” (*Letter from Quebec, Canada, October 10, 1889*).

Compassion

The Word is COMPASSION and calls us to be compassionate to others.

Compassion means “suffer with.” It is derived from the Latin “pati” (suffer) and “cum” (with). This word comes out of the core of the being of God, who so loved humanity that when he saw its suffering, its fragility, its condition...gave us his son, who became one of us (*Philippians 2*).

Compassion is living the Incarnation with the embrace, welcome and love God has for us, helping us to enter into the suffering and pain of others, motivating us to respond as Jesus did.

In a world thirsting for God, our different forms of commitment see and experience violence, alienation, broken relationships and injustice. We are called to be icons of God’s compassion:

“Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man...” (*Philippians 2: 6-7*).

To be in contact with reality compels us to act under our charism, being visible signs of compassionate and merciful love:

“The mission of our congregation is to actualize the saving and healing love of the Incarnate Word ...of him who assumed a human existence sharing in the life, sufferings and hopes of his people” (*Constitutions, Art. 3*).

To see, listen, touch and experience the sufferings of others challenges us to discover a God who is alive, present and active in our world.

When we are lacking compassion, we do violence to ourselves and others, (*Proverbs 11,17*) which separates us from God.

OUR CHARISM AND HISTORY

*Our mission is realized
in compassion.*

The charism of our congregation calls us to contemplate the mystery of God in the world, to listen and see with the eyes of the heart. Tenderness and compassion stretch us to go beyond self – and invite us to be compassionate as we announce the Good News.



Compassion in Scripture

Scripture reinforces our spirituality and commitment.

The book of Job 6:14 states: *“To him that is afflicted pity should be showed from his friend; but he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty”* and thereby does not see the face of God in those who suffer and whoever does this dies.

Jesus showed the mercy of God (*Luke 1, 7-8; Titus 3:4-7*); in Jesus, God revealed the father of mercy and compassion (*2 Cor. 1:3*). The compassion and tenderness of God is poured out for us and is shown in the story of the Good Samaritan (*Luke 10:33*).

• Reflection:

Prayer

*Lord of life:
change our hearts made of stone for hearts of flesh...*

*Give us the grace to love our brothers and sisters
with your heart,
full of mercy and compassion so that,
as you, we can make
the sufferings of your people ours,
and so that we can embrace
them with the infinite tenderness
of your compassion,
and therefore inspire hope.*

*You are father-mother,
compassion that embraces
everything you have created with joy and pain,
suffering and well-being,
sadness and happiness.*

Renew in each of us the charism to be as your son:

*A real and tangible presence
of your compassionate
and merciful love.
Amen.*

Sacrament

The WORD is SACRAMENT and calls us to be prophetic signs of love.

The Incarnation makes everything sacrament. Everything is sacrament because it is a visible sign of God's presence. The sacrament makes present the total mystery of Christ and unites to himself the past-present-future.

Today there is lack of appreciation for the sacred. This is demonstrated in the devaluation of human life, pornography, prostitution, torture, abortion, and the destruction of our environment. In addition, the misuse of technology, abuse of power, immediate gratification and consumerism dehumanize the person.

Sometimes our liturgical celebrations do not communicate the depth and richness of the sacrament. Some reasons for this are inculturation, routine, monotony, exclusiveness and incongruence between what we celebrate and practice.

Through our sacramental life we discover the action of the Spirit in the depth of our being, which helps us develop the actions of God in our lives, freeing us to respond.

OUR CONSTITUTIONS AND HISTORY

Our Constitutions state the importance of our participation in the sacraments:

We participate in the sacramental life of the Church in this way penetrating the paschal mystery and celebrating the universal Church, the life of the resurrected Jesus (*Art. 34*).

“We find Christ sacramentally in the community that prays and worships him” (*Art. 35*).

Living sacramentally is our congregational heritage: “Just as Jesus was the image of God-made-flesh, in the same way Jeanne [Chezard de Matel] experienced the call in her life to be an icon of the Incarnate Word. She reminds us that each of us is called to be a vessel of God, A visible image of God inhabiting the earth” (*Sr. Nancy Lee Smith, IHM*).

Eucharist

The WORD is EUCHARIST and calls us to be bread of life for others.

- Eucharist is:
- 1.- The presence of Jesus the Incarnate Word, who through his Holy Spirit calls us, transforms us and unites us around his table. At this table we are all equal and form one body, the body of Christ. The Eucharist is the tangible presence of God that unites us and transforms us as we respond to the mission of Jesus, who has come so that we may have life in abundance. *(John 10:10)*
 - 2.- Food that nourishes us when we receive the body of Christ. Through the reception of the sacrament we grow to the fullness of Christ. We receive the grace to live the paschal mystery of his Easter and we become bread of life, the bread that is broken and shared. The Word becomes bread that is broken and given in service to others.
 - 3.- An act of thanksgiving for all the blessings received, especially for the gift of our lives.
It is a sign of God's fidelity for all of us.
 - 4.- Communion sign. As food that nourishes us, the Eucharist is a sign that we have been received in communion and that we receive each other.
 - 5.- Reminder of Jesus' redeeming work in the world. As CCVIs we participate in the Eucharist, an oblation and sacrificial presence, incorporated in the oblation of Jesus on the cross.

The Eucharist strengthens and liberates us to respond to the needs of others in the realities of the world today. All people have a desire for unity; unfortunately this unity is obstructed by poverty, hunger, injustice, violence, war and our failure to preserve the earth and its resources.

OUR HISTORY AND MISSION

Returning to our foundational documents, we discover the central place that the Eucharist occupies in our congregation: Mother Jeanne de Matel said: "The Word became flesh. Let us live the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ as an extension of his Incarnation: In this sacrifice we praise and worship the mystery of the Incarnation."

Contemplation

The WORD is CONTEMPLATION and calls us to look at our world with new eyes.

To contemplate means to look deeply, to enter into harmony with God, with self and with others. Contemplation calls us to our center, the deepest part of our being and allows God's revelation to take place within us. Contemplation is fundamental to our spirituality. As Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, we are called to contemplate, to examine the realities of the world and discern the needs of the people of God (*Constitutions, Art. 31*).

When we contemplate the world, we discover wars, poverty, dehumanization, drug addiction, alcoholism and hopelessness. The communication media atrophy our senses, leading to disorientation and desensitization to Gospel values.

This reality calls us to renew our commitment to contemplation and to listen to the voice of God—“I have witnessed the affliction of my people” (*Exodus 3:7*)—and open ourselves to the saving presence of God, who calls us to respond in compassion and in solidarity.

Contemplation helps us to remember the Spirit of the early Christian communities that influenced them to “hold all things in common” and to put on Christ (*Matthew 6:6*). Jesus invites us to come apart and rest a while. Jesus teaches us to pray and the love of the Father (*Matthew 6:9*).

God in nature invites us to contemplate creation. Nature is a gift and a revelation of God.

OUR HISTORY AND MISSION

*Contemplation asks us
to be simple and obedient
to God within us.*

Mother Jeanne Chezard de Matel modeled contemplation constantly, especially the mystery of God in the Incarnate Word:

“My daughter in this foundation, I am the Incarnate Word, I will extend my Incarnation” (*Autobiography*).

Monsignor Claude Marie Dubuis lived contemplation in action; his actions were grounded in his intimate relationship with the Incarnate Word. For Claude, meeting human beings was meeting God. He had complete and absolute trust in God and he let providence guide him:

“Providence, not only surrounds the cradle of this young priest of Christ, but even more, it guides all his steps.”



Contemplation takes us to action: to be a presence of God and to discover God in the world. How will Christ be born in the world? We feel that we are called to nurture our contemplative dimension and to revitalize the missionary spirit in solidarity with the people, especially the poor and marginated. As a congregation, we are called to be the voice of peace in the midst of violence, an instrument of justice in the midst of oppression and a compassionate heart before abuse and suffering.

We have entered the process of refoundation with an open mind and a heart that is listening. Contemplation invites us to look deeply with the eyes of faith at Christ suffering today in the multitudes and to discern new forms to respond in our ministries.

Reflection:

Prayer

*Loving God, we come before you,
open to your revelation through
the mystery of our daily life.*

*Open our eyes to see your presence
giving life to the whole world.*

*Open our ears to listen to your voice
in the cries of your people that are suffering.*

Open our hearts to love the earth and all creation.

*Open our hands so they can be
your compassionate touch
that heals the wounds of the body and the spirit.*

*Reincarnate your Word in us
so that together with Jesus
we can recognize your presence
in all persons and we can reveal to them
your saving love.*

Amen.

