



REFLECTION

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Final Profession Ceremony
Villa Lante, Rome
27 January 2019



While I was preparing this reflection I read an article that was called “*The caravan of the broken dreams*” about the painful exodus taking place in Central America, which is also the exodus of multitudes of displaced people in Asia, Africa and also here in Europe.... In this context I was thinking that what we are celebrating today – the fact that 11 women from four continents are giving themselves definitively to God for the sake of others – is a prophetic sign, a Scripture text that is being fulfilled: the hope that, in spite of everything, it is possible to repair broken dreams, to weave shared dreams that will alleviate suffering and bring happiness. It is possible to have another way of living with each other and of looking after each other on the journey.

The glow of Sophie’s radiance in this Chapel of the Villa Lante, together with the presence of Philippine that has accompanied you during your time of probation, put us in touch with our origins. Both were strong women, with deep desires, but the dream that God had for them took them far beyond anything that they could have imagined. Today is a day for honouring this long line of women who have preceded us, and of whom you are about to become a part: women of prayer and educators; women who are courageous and humble... who trusted and hoped in the love of God at the very heart of their own weakness; who discovered that He has a dream for humanity, and He needs us in order to carry this dream forward. “*A dream to which we want to continue to listen... in the certainty that it can be realised*” (“Life Unfolding”)

In a world of broken relationships, in which we need to recover our sensitivity to the pain of others, you are affirming that it is possible to live a shared life. Community as a space in which we care for and accompany each other, in the midst of the friction that comes from living alongside others. Supported by the love of your sisters, you have kept on going when your journey led you into rough waters that seemed to swamp you, or fire that seemed to burn you.... and through the presence of others, each of you has heard his voice, the voice that will be with you day and night:

“*Do not be afraid... I will be with you*” (Isaiah 43:1)

The definitive **Yes** that you are going to pronounce today is the fruit of a long journey that has brought you to this point, but it is, in fact the *second* yes, in response to God's first yes to your lives:

God's first yes to the complete woman that each of you is, with her shadows and her lights. "*You are precious in my eyes...* Isaiah 43:4.

God's first yes to your history, just as it is, with its bitterness and its sweetness: "*He redeems your life from the pit, and crowns you with love and tenderness*" (Psalm 102).

God's first yes to this future for which he needs you, a future of compassion and justice, a future of peace for the whole of creation.

In the Gospel which today's Sunday liturgy offers you, the passage proclaimed by Jesus is taken from the Servant Songs of the Prophet Isaiah. A text that writes of God's great dream of consoling his people, of liberating them, of restoring their destiny and enabling them to enjoy his blessings. Jesus feels that he is anointed and sent by the Spirit in order to fulfil this dream. (Luke 4:21)

The Spirit, *Ruah*, is feminine in Hebrew: the creative energy that sustains everything that lives. In the creation stories, *Ruah* generates harmony out of chaos: she creates order and beauty...she ensures that each creature has its proper place, and the time that it needs in order to grow. I was moved to discover that the root of the word *Ruah* also contains the word *Reah*, which indicates a space that is filled with perfume.

You are anointed with the perfume of the Spirit so that you may pour it out by means of your way of life, wherever it is most needed. When perfume is poured on to healthy skin, it brings out its beauty, and opens it up to embrace: a sign of celebration and shared joy. When the perfume of the Spirit is poured on to skin that is damaged, it is an ointment that soothes, a gentle balm that heals even the deepest wounds... This is the perfume that Jesus poured out on the faces of the little ones and the downtrodden, those closest to His Heart — and this is the perfume that he wishes to continue to pour out with splendour through each of you.

You have had the experience of being loved in your fragility... Do not be afraid to show your vulnerability. A migrant woman said to a Caritas volunteer: "*I have been given a great deal since I arrived in this country, but you are the first person who has wept with me.*" The Spirit cannot pulsate in the rigid, the secure, or the hardened: the throbbing pulse of the Spirit — which is Joy — reveals itself in weakness, in tenderness,

in fragility... This vulnerability, open to the action of God, that enables us to reach out in gentleness to touch the most wounded parts of others, and to announce to each person – in the midst of their loss, their blindness, their oppression – the good news of their dignity, their worth in the eyes of God: how deeply loved they are. And this unconditional love is the only thing that can heal lives.

The vows that you are going to pronounce, with the strength of the Spirit (since we can do nothing on our own!) will take you out of yourselves and open you up to an existence that is shared and held out for all to see: they will strip you of all of your power so that you may learn from Mary, woman of faith, that the more you empty yourself, the more you will be filled with grace. Within our DNA as rscj we carry a *'love that is overflowing.'* A love that is inclusive, generous, broad, faithful, strong, enduring... that equips us for all other loving, and that will always be a gift and a daily struggle.

Let us place Jesus at the centre of our lives. May your daily contemplation of him make you women who are very human, who know that you are on a journey, learning from others, that you will fall and get up again... Travelling with other women, men and children, from different cultures and spiritual traditions, all wanting to pick up the pieces of their broken dreams, and to work with others to weave **dreams of the Kingdom**, in which life will once again become attainable and grace-filled for everyone, beginning with the little ones.

Today you are anointed by the prayers of our sisters throughout the whole world, from the oldest to the youngest.

You are anointed by the presence and the love of this international community that has gathered here; we are blessed to be able to accompany you.

The women were the ones who anointed Jesus with perfume throughout his life... Wherever you are sent, allow your lives to be anointed by the poor and the vulnerable.

And, whatever happens, remember where we come from, and keep your hearts filled with gratitude.



Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus