



Società del Sacro Cuore
Casa Generalizia

Prot. N° : 21/73

May 31st, 2021

Dear Sisters and the Family of the Sacred Heart,

This letter brings with it LOVE, SOLIDARITY AND HOPE as we prepare to celebrate the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and enter into Jesus's pierced Heart, a heart that is open to both joy and suffering.

What a year we have lived since I wrote to you for the Feast of the Sacred Heart in June 2020! I reread that letter the other day and the following words jumped off the page:

For the first time since we have become a global community, we do not need to search for suffering that we hold in common across the globe. It feels like a heavy yoke has fallen on the shoulders of all of us and particularly on the shoulders of the most vulnerable – poor people, all who are victims of racism, migrants, the elderly. We have been SHOCKED AWAKE not just by the COVID-19 virus, but by also all its tragic consequences and the tumultuous state of our world. No one can deny that our blessed world is broken.

The CALL I heard then from Sophie was a call to SOLIDARITY and I continue to hear it today. Truly this has been a year of SOLIDARITY. It's been a time when our hearts have been pierced and stretched, sometimes to the point of almost breaking. People in schools and projects and communities have reached out to families who have lost loved ones and their means of sustaining themselves; to students in both formal and informal settings who want to continue learning; to those most on the margin who are barely surviving. At the same time that our vocation called us to reach out, many of us have been struggling with the arrival of the virus in our own communities and in our families. We have lived in solidarity, not from a distance but intimately involved in the suffering both within ourselves, within our communities, and among God's people among whom we live and breathe.

We as a global community of sisters, associates, co-workers, family and friends have learned and grown in the midst of this heartrending time. The pandemic has given us time to renew our life in community, understanding in a new way how much we need each other and finding new avenues to build community among ourselves and with others. We have learned how to cross frontiers using technology to strengthen our provincial and global communities, inviting and allowing more people to connect than ever before. Most of all, I know that our prayer both individually and communally has deepened in practice.



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While many of us have felt the loss of participating in the Mass, this time of deprivation has helped us discover new ways to pray together – sharing our lives and breaking bread together, sitting silently before the Blessed Sacrament, sharing our joys and struggles with more depth and more regularity.

Tragically, as you know, the situation of the world is not better. In fact, Covid-19 puts a spotlight on the injustice and inequity of our world, especially when we see on a daily basis how governments prioritize economic gains over the lives of people, even their own people. I don't know about you, but I find the situation in which we are living heavy. And yet we are called to be women and men of HOPE. I pray for myself and for each of you that we can be women and men of hope who trust in God and find places of joy and solace in the midst of widespread difficulty and uncertainty.

Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus or the women at the empty tomb, we need to pay attention and listen to how God is inviting us to something new. We need to thank God that in the midst of adversity, even though we have been isolated and in quarantine, we are more connected to “pierced heart of humanity” throughout the globe than we ever have been. Despite the world lockdown or maybe because of it, we have taken the opportunity to pray together, to share stories, to laugh and mourn as a global community. As a more intentional global community of the Sacred Heart, we need to ask ourselves what we are learning; what from the past we need to let go of; and how can we be part of creating “a new normal” that is more loving, more hopeful, and more in solidarity with each other and with those whom we serve. As women at the foot of the cross, we “look on Him whom they have pierced” and receive the strength and courage we need to journey together.

As a General Council, we thought a hopeful thing we could do is pray together. This year, we invite all of us to pray the Novena of Confidence from June 2 to 10, for our suffering world, for our loved ones and for ourselves. In my experience in the Society, this is the prayer that we often use when a situation is most difficult. You can feel free to modernize the language of this time-honored prayer of the Society if you want. The most important thing is that we pray together *each day for a specific intention*. If you cannot come together as a community, perhaps you could choose a time when you will pause and turn your attention to God. You might also consider touching base with someone who is not in your community, or even in your province or country and praying this prayer together. Sophie understood the power of communal prayer, hoping it would kindle the fire of God's love throughout the world.

As women and men of prayer and action, I encourage each one of us to take some small actions to help our world in this time of difficulty.



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I encourage you in whatever way you can to advocate for a more just sharing of vaccines and medical assistance to those who are excluded both in your own countries and especially in less developed, less powerful countries.

I ask you to take the risk and get vaccinated, if not for your own sake then for the sake of your neighbor.

Lastly, I ask you to pray for our upcoming Special Chapter, that rooted in the love of Jesus and in the power of the Spirit, we as a congregation may renew, recreate and reenergize our mission and our sharing of our resources for today's world and for tomorrow's.

As we go forward united in the Heart of Jesus, let us pray for each other that

Rooted and grounded in love, we will comprehend what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, so that [we] may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph 3:17-19)

United in One Heart,

Barbara Dawson RSCJ



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O Lord Jesus Christ,
To your most Sacred Heart, I confide:

- *Our suffering world*
- *Countries at war*
- *The migrants and refugees*
- *The impoverished and most vulnerable*
- *The sick and dying*
- *Those who have lost their jobs*
- *Our beloved ones*
- *Our next Chapter*
- *Vocations*

Only look upon me,
And then do What your Sacred Heart inspires.
Let your Sacred Heart decide
I count on it,
I trust in it
I throw myself on Your mercy,
Lord Jesus!
You will not fail me.