

## CLOSING WORDS OF THE 31<sup>ST</sup> GENERAL CHAPTER

July 29, 2025

Sr. Elsy Thomas

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Dear Sisters:

With our souls filled with gratitude and hope, we prepare ourselves to close this 31<sup>st</sup> General Chapter, which living has been a true Pentecost for all of us, a time of grace, encounter, listening, and profound discernment that we have lived in the cenacle of this Chapter Hall.

Inspired by the theme that has accompanied us, "*Consecrated Life Today: Identity and Belonging, Communion and Diversity, Hope and Commitment*", we have walked together, from the announcement of the Chapter until today, weaving with patience and love the tapestry of our shared vocation. A tapestry made of words, silences, intuitions, fraternal gestures, and trusting desires.

I want to begin by expressing my most sincere gratitude, first of all, to God, who has accompanied us with His presence and His light. My gratitude also goes to each of you for coming with a heart open to transformation, for being part of our Chapter community and contributing to it the best of each one of you.

Thanks to the Sisters of the Central Coordinating Commission for their diligent service;  
to the Moderator, Secretary, and Scrutineers Sisters, for their tireless work sustaining the structure of the process;  
to the auxiliary secretaries, who have helped us with their silent and constant dedication;  
to the translators, who have built bridges between languages and hearts;  
to those who have prepared and facilitated the electronic voting system, for their patience and effective work;  
to the Laity of Saint Anne Family who have participated in the Chapter, enriching our vision with their committed witness and shared surrender;  
to the Sisters and staff of the General House, always present with their discreet, attentive, and caring service;  
and to all those—visible and invisible—who have been a face of community care and commitment: those who prepared the daily prayer, the animation, liturgy, and communication teams...

And, in a very special way, I express our profound gratitude to Father Dario Molla, for having guided us, with spiritual wisdom, in the Retreat prior to the Chapter; to the Archbishop of Zaragoza, Fr. Carlos Escribano, for accompanying us in the Opening Eucharist; and to Fr. Enrique Ester Mariñoso for enlightening us daily with his reflection on the Word. Likewise, to Father Mathew Vattamattam, C.M.F., whose clear and serene words reminded us that *direction begins with desire*, and that where there is authentic desire, the Spirit finds a channel and space to work.

Thank you to the Sisters who have completed their service in the General Government, with whom we have shared a part of our lives and the life of the Congregation. May you continue to give the best of yourselves wherever you go, as you have done until now. The places we have shared will continue


to speak to us of your presence. Thank you, Carmen, Crisanta, Gracy, and Alicia. You know you can count on our prayers.


Our Chapter has been deeply marked by the methodology of conversation in the Spirit, which has not been just a tool for us, but a profound experience of communion and grace. As Father Mathew pointed out, *“conversations in the Spirit, rooted in listening, silence, and shared vulnerability, allow for true discernment; it is not about debating, but about speaking with one single heart”*. And that is how we have lived it. This form of encounter has helped us transcend the logic of the argument to enter into the dynamics of the Spirit, where it is not the strongest reason that wins, but the deepest voice, the one that springs from communion and not from confrontation.


From this synodal experience, a motion strongly springs up that resonates deep within: **returning to the source**. To drink again from the living waters of the charism that gave rise to us. To return, not from nostalgia or routine, but from renewed desire, from a thirst for inspiration and peace. To return to God, the source of life, and place under His loving gaze our uncertainties, our wounds, our fears, our hope, and our deep desire to work along the driving force lines He has traced for us.


Like trees planted by streams of water, we are nourished by intertwined roots, invisible but firm. And in that shared depth, what we are flourishes: community, fraternity, congregational body. To the extent that we are rooted in God, and we trust in His faithful love, everything is transformed within us, even our wounds.


As sisters pilgrims of the Spirit, we have opened ourselves to His action and have heard Him whisper to us where He wants to lead us in the coming years:


 Toward a re-encounter with our **charism**, not as a memory, but as an incarnated and courageous commitment, from a profound and prophetic spirituality.


 Toward a more vibrant and **incarnated spiritual life**, capable of encountering God in what is daily and in what is fragile, sustaining hope with active faith.

 Toward living **everything from fraternity**, from transparent, humane, and reconciled communities, not only inhabited, but habitable. Communities that may be home and witness, woven with listening, trust, and shared deep joy.

 Toward a bold and compassionate **shared mission**, sensitive to the cry of the poor and of the earth. A mission capable of reaching out, even with fatigue, but always with enthusiasm and availability.

 Toward an integral and liberating, universal, and contextualized **formation** that may transform and prepare us—sisters and laity—to live the charism, leadership, and shared mission with depth and creativity.

 Toward **caring for** ourselves, our sisters in the community, the others, and nature, favouring that our spaces may be truly safe environments and eradicating all forms of abuse.

 Toward a humble, horizontal, and generative **leadership**, where authority may be lived as a service that **empowers, accompanies, and creates space for others to shine**.

The Spirit has also suggested that we may hold an Extraordinary Chapter where we evaluate our living of these driving force lines and, above all, conclude the study of different models of government that we will soon begin.

Sisters, the Spirit has breathed among us. He has spoken to us in silence and in words, in shared peace and sincere searching. He has given us back the certainty that we do not walk alone because His presence dwells within us.

We have clearly realized that we belong to something greater than ourselves: to an alive charismatic family that transcends generations and geography. We have understood, once again, that diversity is not only accepted: it is celebrated, embraced as a gift and a richness that fertilizes our communion, because it reflects the beauty of God.

This Chapter is not an island or an isolated page: it is another thread in the great tapestry of our congregational history. Each of us has contributed her unique strand: a timely word, a smile, an intuition, or a silent gesture. All of this has been woven into this sacred experience. Because everything flourishes better when it is cared for in company.

In this spirit of what has been lived and intertwined, as General Government, we want to give you a simple but eloquent symbol: a small piece of wool. As you hold it in your hands, may you remember what was shared, what was discerned, what was dreamed. May it echo back to you the voices, the warmth of the encounter, and the certainty that, wherever we may be, we remain united in hope and in the commitment to continue weaving communion with others from diversity.

Return now to your communities with an open soul, a willing heart, and an ignited spirit. Be bearers of what you have lived. Wherever we are, may we be faithful expressions of God's deep and gratuitous love.

May Saint Joachim and Saint Anne, parents in the faith, continue to accompany us with their silent tenderness. May the strength and resilience of Mother Maria Rafols and the missionary passion of Father John Bonal continue to encourage our steps. May Our Lady of Pillar continue to be our rock of support and our companion on the journey.

And now, with serene gratitude and the joyful certainty that the Lord has been great to us, I FORMALLY DECLARE CLOSED THE 31<sup>st</sup> GENERAL CHAPTER of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Anne, in Zaragoza, on July 29, 2025.