

Statio Conference October 2007

FORMATION

Constitutions Chapter VI:1-6; RB 58-61



Formation is a lifelong process of transformation into Christ - Const VI:2

During this month, the first Statio in our Jubilee Year, we meditate on *Formation, Chapter VI* of our Constitutions. Many challenging sentences are in the spiritual text of this chapter, we can only mention a few. Again, I encourage each Sister individually to study, pray and live the Constitutions. Remember, that you made your vows on the Rule of St. Benedict and our Constitutions. That means, you must be familiar with the text and content as first step and very practical make your own life programme based on the Constitutions if you desire to live your vows as promised. This chapter applies for each Sister as all of us are in ongoing formation, our own conversion programme.

Formation is a lifelong process of transformation into Christ. What does this mean for me? To transform means a radical change as a caterpillar is transformed into a butterfly. You might remember when you first learned that a caterpillar and a butterfly are the same species. I could not believe it, as you do not see any resemblance in these two creatures. The process of transformation into a butterfly is not an easy one for the caterpillar and involves a kind of death. But what a beautiful outcome, see the colours, the dance of flight, light. Now how can we be transformed into Christ? As Jesus says: "This is impossible for man, but for God everything is possible", Mt 19:26. Does that mean we just wait and let it happen with the power of God? No, God wants us *to respond ever more fully to the call of Christ*, Const VI:4, He wants our very active involvement in this change, which is basically to follow Christ closely. A great example is the Apostle Paul. He says: "I forget what is behind me and do my best to reach what is ahead. So I run straight toward the goal in order to win the prize, which is God's call through Christ Jesus to the life above". Philippians 3:13-14. You know how Paul embraced the call of God, how this call beyond all dreams was his treasure and the center of his life. He *surrendered himself wholly to Christ*, as our text says, and *was so enabled to serve others according to God's plan of salvation*. How much would I like that this fire of surrender to God, for transformation, this eagerness to be wholly available for God would be in the heart of each Sister.

For a long time words of *Pope Benedict XVI* spoken in Brazil to the Religious, 12 May 2007, were posted at our notice board. Did you take them to your heart? You are one of the persons addressed, *being a witness of the faithful love for God and your brethren. Are you aiming at this unreserved, total and definitive, unconditional and passionate love for Jesus Christ, manifested in silence, in contemplation, in prayer and in service, especially to the poorest and most abandoned?*

May 7, 2007 the Pope addressed the Superior Generals, M. Angela was present. I quote from his speech; words leading us on our way of ongoing formation:

... Yet always maintaining solid interior relations with Christ. In fact, only from this union with God can the prophetic role of your mission flow and be nourished, which consists of proclaiming the Kingdom of heaven...

Never cede, therefore, to the temptation to distance yourself from intimacy with your Heavenly Spouse by allowing yourselves to be overly attracted by the interests and problems of daily life....

Following the example of Jesus the Founders and Foundresses tried to communicate God's love with words and concrete gestures through the total gift of themselves, always keeping their gaze and their hearts fixed on him."

I humbly ask each Sister listen to what the representative of Jesus Christ is telling you. Ask yourself during this Statio: how is my interior relationship with Christ? Do I long to be with my Heavenly Spouse in prayer, in silence, in contemplation? Do I miss something, if I do not find any time for this today? Is my heart fixed on Him? How does this translate into my daily life and daily plan? Or is everything so much routine so that if I am honest to myself, I do not miss much or anything, if I do not have the time and opportunity for prayer?

During this Jubilee Year God calls loud out to us for conversion. All outward activities of the Jubilee are useless and without fruit if we do not seriously work and pray for our transformation into Christ. This is not the responsibility of the superior but of each mature sister herself first of all. Take all the little disappointments, hurts, contradictions to our own will, difficulties in community life as a challenge posed by God to abandon your own small self, Ego in order to surrender to the will of God. This will of God comes in such small events. Often we live so much on the surface that we do not even notice that Christ was calling us to greater love. We blame others, the stupidity of Sisters, coworkers, the weather we do not like etc. Keep your gaze and heart fixed on Jesus, the Holy Father tells you. Do not miss the call of love *for continuous learning and growth throughout our lifetime to seek to deepen our relationship with the Lord and the community.* This is the wording of our Constitutions, no. 4.

I quote from the opening conference of the Meeting of the Superiors in May 2007

Essentials for a new Spirituality that will generate hope and life for all are as follows:

- ❖ *From traditional Religious Life, work oriented, self-sufficient and safe, to a Religious Life without power, simple, human and that shares with the poor.*
- ❖ *From an intimate spirituality made of many words and distant to the realities of life, to a mysticism founded on the Word of God, that feeds our passion for God and for humanity.*
- ❖ *From the temptations of consumerism, of secularisation, of individualism to a Religious Life centered on the defense of the dignity of human life and of all creation*
- ❖ *From the superficiality of external appearances to a Religious Life that lives from inside, from the essential of the human heart*
- ❖ *From our fears and human limitations to a Religious Life that lets God mold us, transform us, save and send us to new situations in life where we can be credible and luminous signs of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

UISG 134 p 6-7

During this Statio take stock of your own life, in front of your Heavenly Spouse:

- What do I do for my ongoing formation?
- Is the relationship to Jesus Christ really the centre of my life day after day?
- What can I do to deepen my relationship with Christ?
- Is my spiritual life built on the foundation of the Word of God?
- What are the Missionary Benedictine values mentioned in #3, am I convinced of them?
- Do I have a role model of a Sister transformed into Christ, perhaps one of our Pioneer Sisters? How does such a Sister look like?
- Come into an inner dialogue with a Pioneer Sister, perhaps with Sr. Bernadine Hefele? What would she point out in your life that needs change? How would she help you to transform your life into Christ?
- How would I look like being transformed into Christ?

Myself, I bow my head in shame, knowing this goal is far ahead and ask God for his grace of conversion, of transformation for myself and for all Sisters in the Priory of Ndanda.

May our Lady, Queen of all Virgins, Mother of God, help us that Christ may be born in our lives for the glory of God and the evangelization of the World.

We thank for 100 years of Grace and ask for the zeal of Mission.

Sr. Raphaela Haendler OSB