



Un Carisma vivo, un Camino compartido 150 años de las Hijas de Jesús

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Faith and Trust

Held in God's hands

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We never imagined that in the 21st century, we would be undertaking a journey of faith, of trust and of hope as a pandemic rages and disrupts and changes life as we know it. Today, as we glimpse the dawning of hope, I call to mind the great men and women of in God through the ages and through different times. Especially remembered is the beloved woman whose way of life and spirit we follow – our Mother Foundress.

As the virus spread swiftly and upended lives, most of us felt at a loss. Friends asked, “If Mother Foundress were alive today, how would she face this situation? How does one have faith and trust in times like these?”. It became an occasion of remembering how she held on to the One who loved her most.

Mother Foundress did not have it easy. She founded the Congregation at a time of political instability. She struggled with lack of resources and sometimes, even support from her own sisters. Communication with Fr. Herranz was cut. She had to deal with the Bishopric of Salamanca, creditors, not to mention sicknesses, death, difficulties with foundations. She suffered much. But in reading her letters, one perceives a constant underlying sense of equanimity, a kind of peace, of faith and trust that God would see her through. Her well-known sayings were born from her most difficult moments. Who can forget these words– “In him we have everything and without him everything we have is lost. Let us have faith, a faith that is alive, constant and unending faith...” (Letter 13). In the early years of few vocations she said, “You are aware of our situation but all my trust is placed in God and in His Holy Providence.” (L 37). At a time when a small community was sick, she stated, “Trust in God and in his holy Mother with great faith and hope...” (L 35), something she would reiterate in other instances of sickness, when, after telling the sisters to have medical treatment, she would add: “Have faith and hope in God” (L 53) and “to receive with great faith whatever He in His divine and most holy will may dispose” (L71). In the many difficulties with foundations her faith and trust remained unshaken: “God is our Father and He will look after us” (L 40), “God our Lord will never abandon us because we are His Daughters... Let us work for the welfare of our students and for the glory of God with great trust in His Divine Providence”. She was often sick, and at times seriously ill, and yet to Fr. Joaquin Perez Pando, OP, with whom she maintained an affectionate friendship and communication that spanned many



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years, she said, “The power of God is very great, because in spite of suffering from a long sickness, I am still alive” (L 15).

The lack of funds to build schools were a constant concern. At times enrollment was low, but she simply says: “Well, God can remedy everything” (L 140). With news about a change of teachers and of some girls leaving, she stated: “Things in this world are just like that, my daughter. May God be blessed and may He dispose all things, for He is the only one who can do all things” (L 405). Her advice to a young girl seeking God’s will for her was: “Pray with much trust, humility and perseverance, because the Lord wants us to ask for what we want and present to Him our needs” (L 435).

Her faith and trust was born of a deep relationship of love, and her experience of God’s fidelity and compassionate Fatherhood would mark her all her life. As GCXVIII Det. 12 so aptly states: “The experience of knowing that we are loved unconditionally by God brings us to a vital stance of full and total trust in the Father”.



“Following the spirit of Mother Candida, with our trust placed in God” (GC XVII Det. 37) how do we live faith and trust, each according to one’s vocation, in the global situation we are living in? Instead of telling you how, let me share what I have witnessed first hand of faith and trust in action. These images, imprinted in my mind and heart, speak for themselves very powerfully. They are images of families gathering together virtually every night to pray for each other and the world, to share faith, to celebrate life; persons who with their cellphones and laptops lend a sympathetic ear and give a consoling word to those in sorrow; sons and daughters and neighbors dropping food and groceries in their old parents’ and friends’ home, giving the elderly the faith and trust that there still are good people in the world; the daily prayers of the sisters with long lists of people to intercede for, who trust that





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we will storm heaven for the ones they love; religious giving out food supply to the poor and to those who have been deprived of work, trusting, even as the supply runs out, that the God who never fails us will augment the needs of those left in the margins. All these bring to life the words of Mother Foundress, “Let us place ourselves in the hands of God (L 188)... trust Him who is the Father who takes care of us all (Letter 139). What about you, reader? What images do you ponder in your heart?

Pope Francis so poignantly states: “With the eyes of faith, we can see the light which the Holy Spirit always radiates in the midst of darkness...” (EG 84). It means “believing in God, believing that He truly loves us, that He is alive, that He is mysteriously capable of intervening, that He does not abandon us and that He brings good out of evil by his power and his infinite creativity” (EG 278).

Thus, I end with Love Himself. When I think of God our Compassionate Father the image I have is that “hands”, “hands” of a Father who knows our frailties and never abandons us. As Henri Nouwen wrote,

... hands. They have held me from the hour of my conception, they welcomed me at my birth, held me close to my mother’s breast, fed me, and kept me warm.... protected me in times of danger and consoled me in times of grief... waved me goodbye and always welcomed me back. Those hands are God’s hands. They are also the hands of my parents, teachers, friends, healers and all those whom God has given me to remind me of how safely I am held¹”.

And just as He shows us His care in the many hands that have held us, especially these days, shall we not also be God’s hands to others?

¹ Nouwen, Henri. *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. St. Paul Press Training School in India by arrangement with Darton, Longman and Todd, Ltd. 2010, p. 108