

“THIS NEW SITUATION IMPOSES NEW DUTIES ON US”

“The Spirit impels us to broaden our horizons and urges us toward a process of change of mind and heart that opens us to hope, to a warm welcome of others, and to collaboration with those who work for a new humanity”

STJ Constitutions, Art. 18

“It is the Spirit that gives life; not the flesh or outward appearance, which may help to guide the Spirit, but without it will be nothing more than a dead letter. (cf. Jn 6:63)

We recognize that as circumstances change, the rule of conduct must be modified...”

E.O. Let's Get Organized

INTRODUCTION

With this theme, we want to become more aware that we find ourselves today in **“a new situation,”** one that **“imposes new duties on us”** in many areas of our life and mission, particularly in the area of spirituality.

Almost three years ago, the General Chapter invited us to live and offer a Teresian spirituality, which calls for a new sensibility. Living it, moreover, requires clarity and strength to recognize the difficulties and face the obstacles we encounter in our various realities.

PREPARING OUR HEARTS

There is no doubt that in the Society we share in a new spiritual sensibility (evangelical and Teresian) expressed in the Chapter Option. In this reflection, we focus on the Second Goal and on Invitations 1 and 2:

“To cultivate a spirituality that LISTENS to reality, fosters ENCOUNTER, rediscovers SILENCE and CONTEMPLATION, and enables us to respond EVANGELICALLY to the challenges of reality”

We can read Article 59 of the Constitutions[1] and ask ourselves what events (social, ecclesial, etc.) have helped us to “broaden our horizons,” “urging us toward a process of change of mind and heart.”

LET'S MEET

We invoke the presence of the Spirit among us... and ask for the ability to see, listen, and perceive with our hearts.

We share some of our personal reflections from the previous section, "Preparing Our Hearts": events (incidents, projects, writings...) that have helped us open our minds and hearts.

We take another step forward

- The Chapter **INVITATIONS** speak of "cultivating," "provoking," "listening," "rediscovering"... Expressions that sound wonderful, but that we struggle to put into practice. Almost three years have passed, and we ask ourselves once again how we can **LISTEN** to reality, **PROVOKE** encounter, and **REDISCOVER** silence and contemplation.
- From its very beginnings, **SILENCE** has held an important place in the life and mission of the Society. The **DOCUMENTS OF PERFECTION** devote Chapter 7 to **SILENCE** and Chapter 8 to **PRAYER**. We can read them and relate them to the Second Goal of the Chapter Option, "Teresian Spirituality."

SOME QUESTIONS TO ENCOURAGE SHARING

How do we put into practice today the call from the Documents of Perfection: "You must strive with all your might to be souls of prayer, teachers of prayer—the daughters of Saint Teresa of Jesus, like your Mother. For this reason, you must be instructed and well-versed in the different ways of praying, so that you may fruitfully carry out this sublime apostolate"? (p. 37)

Why, in the times we are living in, are we invited to cultivate **LISTENING to reality and to **REDISCOVER** the value of **SILENCE** and **CONTEMPLATION**?**

In light of the so "changed" circumstances of our world today, what "rules of conduct" is the Lord asking us to modify so that we may be Good News and a sign of hope?

WE SHARE OUR PRAYER

“Christian mysticism, at its core, is not a mysticism of closed eyes but of painfully open eyes. It demands a special exercise in seeing, an overcoming of our innate difficulties in seeing and of our human narcissism.” (Metz, Johann Baptist. *Toward a Mysticism of Open Eyes: When Spirituality Breaks Through*).

We ask the Lord to open our eyes... we name realities, people, and situations regarding which we ask today to have a **“mysticism of open eyes”**...

This time of communal prayer and sharing can be concluded with the song “Give Me, Lord, Your Gaze” or another song chosen for the occasion.

TEXTS FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. **Documents on Perfection, Chapter 7: Silence, and Chapter 8: Prayer.**

2. **Chapter Option Goal 2.1–2 (Document XVIII of the General Chapter, p. 17):**

“Living TERESIAN SPIRITUALITY while connected to the Source and WITH A SENSE OF MISSION invites us to:

Cultivate a spirituality that listens to reality, fosters encounters in the manner of Jesus, and becomes a balm that heals wounds.

Rediscover the value of silence and contemplation, sharpen our listening, perceive the Presence of God in all creation, and live from a place of wonder and gratitude.”

3. **FRANCESC TORRALBA: Contemplation**

He speaks about the practice of contemplation and the conditions or dispositions necessary for its exercise. He offers some reasons for its difficulty in our time and warns us of obstacles we must overcome.

Human beings, in addition to acting and producing—their two most common activities—are capable of contemplation. Contemplation is an activity that begins with the external senses but transcends the plane of perception.

Contemplation is not the same as closely observing a detail or a fragment of nature. That is what a scientist, a biologist, or a geologist does, strictly speaking.

Contemplation is not mere seeing, nor is it observation. It is being receptive to reality, opening the pores of one's sensitivity as wide as possible to capture the pulse of the external reality, to connect with what lies hidden within it, with that backdrop invisible to the eye. It demands the utmost transparency, the willingness to embrace everything within it. It consists of immersing oneself in it, letting go of oneself.

When one contemplates, one ceases to see oneself as someone standing before reality—like a spectator facing a performance—and ceases to be an active source, dissolving into what is being contemplated, losing oneself in reality. This is what happens when one contemplates a painting or a seascape; when one immerses oneself in a sonata by Johann Sebastian Bach or gazes at the celestial dome during a long August night.

The practice of contemplation requires conditions that are rarely found in our world. In our world, there is often a disproportion between the active and the contemplative life. We are caught up in a frantic pace of activity that prevents us from contemplating reality—which reveals itself to us at every moment.

All contemplation requires time, and speed is a fundamental obstacle. It also requires an inner attitude of peace and deep stillness, a willingness to receive, to allow oneself to be surprised by reality. Contemplation does not seek anything in particular. The person who cultivates it stimulates their spiritual intelligence, for by contemplating reality, they transcend the appearances of things, see their hidden side, and enter into communion with the mystery of being.

The second obstacle to the practice of contemplation is distraction. The constant multitude of sensory stimuli makes it impossible to contemplate anything attentively, without any distraction whatsoever. Contemplation requires, in addition to slowness and attention, detachment. To achieve this, one must overcome the tendency to withdraw into oneself, to place oneself at the center of one's reflection. Contemplation is not arguing, nor is it reflecting; nor is it dialoguing or responding. It is opening oneself to the totality of reality, becoming one with it, surrendering to it. It necessarily requires overcoming the ego.

Contemplation is a movement akin to flowing: it consists of letting things pass, of allowing what is outside to circulate, without any desire to appropriate it. Those who contemplate have no desire to possess or dominate what they are contemplating. Contemplation is a form of liberation, and it does not preclude the possibility that others may also contemplate and enjoy the same reality being contemplated. (Francesc Torralba, *Spiritual Intelligence*, pp. 199–202).