



SUPERIORE GENERALE
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**THE SUPERIOR GENERAL'S LETTER
ON THE SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

Dear Confreres:

Greetings in the names of Christ and of Mary Immaculate! We are celebrating our titular Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception at the beginning of the new liturgical year as the Church is about to open Jubilee Year 2025. We know that the mystery of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary is the essence of our charism. It has always been a particular sign, strength and joy of our Marian vocation (cf. C. #2). The theme of the Jubilee year is **hope**. The letter inaugurating the Jubilee is called, *Spes Non Confundit* - "Hope does not disappoint" (Rom.5:5). The Church is being called to embark upon a pilgrimage of hope during this Jubilee year. As a Congregation, we can help the Church to navigate this pilgrimage. In this Circular Letter, I would like to offer some reflections on this Jubilee and on how we as Marian Fathers and Brothers can live out our charism during this year of grace from the Lord.

Fully living Jubilee 2025

The Church gives us a wealth of resources to understand the meaning of the Jubilee year beginning with of course, an app which can be downloaded – *Iubilaum25*. It features a countdown to the opening of the Jubilee year along with articles and news items about the year. I recommend reading *Spes Non Confundit*, the **Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025** from Pope Francis. Also helpful are: 1) the **Letter of the Holy Father Francis to Msgr. Rino Fisichella, President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization for the Jubilee 2025** and 2) the **Decree on the Granting of the Indulgences during the Ordinary Jubilee Year 2025 called by his Holiness Pope Francis** from the Apostolic Penitentiary.

The celebration of this Jubilee year will call to mind past Jubilee celebrations which we have participated in including the Great Jubilee 2000 and the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy which took place in 2016 when our Founder, St. Stanislaus of Jesus and Mary was canonized. During the Year of Mercy, Holy Doors were opened all over the world, including in some of our Shrines and Churches. The Vatican clarified that this year, there wouldn't be a repeat of that practice. However, there are many ways that the Jubilee indulgence can be gained such as passing through the Holy Doors at the four Papal Basilicas in Rome (A Holy Door will also be opened in a prison in Rome.) Additionally, the indulgence can be gained through



pilgrimages to sacred sites in Rome, in the Holy Land, to the Cathedral of a diocese or to other sacred places designated by the bishop; through performing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy during the Jubilee year such as visits to the sick, the imprisoned, the lonely elderly, the disabled; acts of penance, fasting and offering alms to the poor; supporting religious or social works especially in defense of human life, helping abandoned children, young people in difficulty, or migrants; Eucharistic adoration, participating in a parish mission, a formation activity, etc. It is worth reading the documents to learn more so that we can help the whole Church to take full advantage of the spiritual gifts and opportunities that we are being given.

The plenary indulgence which can be gained under the usual conditions can be applied to the souls in purgatory. Our Father Founder would certainly approve. The Jubilee year gives us many opportunities to form the faithful and to teach them about the truths of our faith, especially those found at the heart of our charism. In its document, the Apostolic Penitentiary urges those of us who are priests to generously offer our availability and self-dedication to the faithful in the sacrament of penance during the Jubilee, even during the celebration of Mass. The Lord wants to pour an abundance of graces on the Church during this year. Let us open our hearts to these graces and encourage all those to whom we minister to do the same. We are all in need of renewal in light of all that the world went through during the pandemic. We are also mindful of all the sufferings inflicted on people because of the wars that are raging. We especially think of our confreres in Ukraine as well as many people in the Mideast. In a time of confusion and discouragement, it is easy for people to lose hope. In his Bull of Indiction, Pope Francis asks us to reflect on the words of St. Paul, “Since we are justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing in the glory of God... Hope does not disappoint, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (*Rom 5:1-2.5*). Our charism can teach us how to live out this hope during the Jubilee year and beyond.

Sign, Strength and Joy

The mystery of the Immaculate Conception is a particular sign for us. What does this mean? A sign points us toward something else. This sign points us toward something in particular. Toward what? It indicates God’s love for us and His desire to save us. God wants to share with us the same gifts that He has shared with Mary in this great mystery. We receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and sanctifying grace through baptism and the other sacraments. God loved Mary in a very particular way from the beginning of her existence because of her unique vocation. God loves each of us in a particular way as well. He has a unique vocation for each of us to fulfill. He wants us to become holy. In her *Fiat*, Mary gives us a beautiful example of holiness, of surrender to the Father’s will.

The mystery of the Immaculate Conception is a sign for us of the efficacy of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of Our Lady. From the first instant of her human life, she was filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. She received the fullness of grace. As our Father Founder rightly noted about Mary in one of his meditations in *Inspectio cordis*: “she who was full of



grace and full of the Holy Spirit". There was no obstacle to the action of God in her heart. Constitutions #7 reminds us that, "From her conception, free from sin and full of grace and filled with the gratuitous love of the Holy Spirit, she is the fruit of the paschal victory of Christ and the first partaker of the redemption... By this mystery above all, Mary urges the conferes to trust in the unlimited fruitfulness of the work of redemption, to avoid all sin, to love purity of heart, to imbue life fully with divine grace and charity, and to so build up the Church in unity "that she be holy and without blemish" (Eph 5:27). Our Founder had wanted the white habit to be a sign of this mystery. This year, those of us who have begun to wear the habit on different occasions have discovered that it is an important sign to the world.

The mystery of the Immaculate Conception is also our strength. We are all aware of our weaknesses, our failings, our sins. This mystery reminds us of Jesus' words, "whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5). After the Resurrection, Jesus told His disciples, "I am sending the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." (Lk 24:49). Mary was clothed with that power from the first moment of her existence. We have received this power at baptism, confirmation and for some of us, ordination. St. Paul reminds us to stir into flame the gift of God that we have received (cf. 2 Tim 1:6). Who can forget the strength and consolation that Blessed George found in the mystery of the Immaculate Conception? As he wrote in his Spiritual Diary on January 13, 1911, "I thank You, Lord, for having given me such extraordinary feelings of love for the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In the past I found this prayer difficult. But now, how sweet it is to fall at her feet and to immerse myself in prayer! Overwhelmed by these feelings of incomparable sweetness, my soul swoons and my body is filled with wondrous, incomprehensible, and inexpressible tremors. It is like the feeling I had when I pressed the holy cross to my heart." It is not surprising that Blessed George had a similar feeling contemplating the mystery of the Immaculate Conception and that of the Cross of Christ, since Mary "is the fruit of the paschal victory of Christ and the first partaker of the redemption" (C, #7). The two mysteries are intimately united.

Finally, the mystery of the Immaculate Conception is our joy. It is easy to grow discouraged and to lose hope in the world today because of the challenges that we face. However, this mystery reminds us that God is in charge of our world. Mary began her life free from sin and she remained pure throughout her life. She was not subject to corruption and the Evil One never had any kind of hold over her. We struggle with our sins and our weaknesses but the mystery of iniquity – *mysterium iniquitatis* (cf. Apostolic Exhortation - *Reconciliation and Penance*, n. 19) will not have the upper hand in the end if we remain steadfast as Mary did. Let us recall God's words after the original sin, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; They will strike at your head, while you strike at their heel" (Gen 3:15). Let us never lose the peace of Christ in our hearts despite the obstacles that we must face every day. In her Magnificat, Mary's heart was overflowing with joy, "Mary said, 'My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior'" (Lk 1:46-47). May this joy, which is a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit, be part of our witness to the world.



Pilgrims of Hope

I will be thinking of all of you today on our Patronal Feast Day. I entrust our Congregation to Mary, our Mother and our Patroness. She is also a model for us and for the whole Church. Her earthly life reminds us of what is possible. We can become holy if we cooperate with God's grace. May we continue to trust in Divine Providence which our Founder left to us.

I especially embrace with my prayers our elderly confreres and those who are sick or are undergoing any sort of crisis. We also remember our deceased confreres along with our deceased loved ones. We entrust them to the mercy of God. I ask you to remember in your prayers Fr. Kestutis Brilius, MIC, the Superior of our Vicariate in Lithuania who recently died unexpectedly. The members of the Chapter last year expressed a desire to strengthen our presence in Lithuania since the Vicariate is very weak. I'm reminded of the situation in Mariampole at the beginning of the 20th Century. It seems that history is repeating itself. The tomb of Blessed George is part of our patrimony and we hope that there could continue to be a Marian presence there into the future. Please pray for the Vicariate and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. A diocesan priest did join us and he will profess his first vows in Mariampole on December 8th of this year. We are also seeking to verify another presumed miracle attributed to Blessed George. Additionally, the Lithuanian Parliament has voted to dedicate the Year 2027 to Blessed George in honor of the 100th Anniversary of his death and of the ratification of the Concordat between Lithuania and the Holy See. Blessed George was responsible for that agreement which preserved Lithuania as a Catholic nation. Let us continue to pray fervently for the grace of his canonization. I invite the whole Congregation to pray the novena in anticipation of the feast day of Blessed George on January 27th for this intention and for the situation in Lithuania. We also pray for the ongoing processes of our other candidates for the altars. We have such a wonderful patrimony in the example of confreres who have gone before us who show us that a life of holiness is within our reach if we live the religious life which we professed at our first vows.

Let us pray for each other during this Jubilee Year. May we live out our charism to the fullest. May we become signs of strength, joy and hope to this world on our pilgrimage to heaven!

Immaculata Virginis Maria Conceptio sit nobis salus et protectio !



Fr. Joseph G. Roesch, MIC
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Superior General