



Dear Sisters,

The beginning of Advent is for the Universal Church a start into a new Church year. Our Congregation is also about to start into a very challenging and decisive time.

Preparations for the meeting of the capitulars in January are underway, and the General Chapter in July 2019 is getting closer and closer.

Does this make us afraid? Are we looking with fear into the future because we do not know what it will bring? Are we feeling alone and wanting to give up in our situation?

No, we are not alone! Again and again, history gives us people who have faced similar challenges; with them, we can seek advice and help. We may entrust Mary with our fear and wrestling. She has felt in her own life and in her own body what it means to be faithful to the Will of God - to give Him a YES when He calls and to be faithful to Him, whatever comes.

Knowing that we celebrate the birth of the Savior, the long-promised Messiah, at Christmas, we read and hear the texts of the Holy Scriptures given by the Church in the coming days. We know that the yearning of the chosen people has received an answer in Jesus Christ.

"The people that live in the dark see a bright light!" (Is. 9:1)

This is beautiful, but the goal of seeing the light and a good outcome of our struggles is very much hidden, if not completely unrecognizable in our everyday lives.

Mary has spoken her FIAT - she has said, "I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to thy Word!" And to this vow, she remained faithful through all difficulties. We accompany Mary in how she lived her way of life in these days of Advent and beyond. We witness her faithfulness to her FIAT and can therefore guess the challenges and the painful experiences she faced. In this way, we see that Mary was also given to us as a mother and model of Christ her Son.

In the tradition of our Congregation, we are invited, on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, to renew our vows. Each sister of our Congregation is privileged to surrender to the Will of God in her personally spoken FIAT.

Many ups and downs have been experienced by every single Sister personally. The whole Congregation has experienced many joys and sorrows in our long history. We were also allowed to experience God's unbroken fidelity through all of the light and darkness. He will continue to faithfully stand by us and guide us safely through all uncertainty.

Let us, therefore, renew our FIAT to God on December 8th, full of courage and confidence, and proclaim together, "I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to thy Word!"

Pace e bene, Sr. Maria Irina