



Instituto Calasancio

Hijas de la Divina Pastora

*“Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us,
according as we hope in thee.”
(Sal 32,22)*

Madrid, February 22, 2023

**To the Sisters and religious Communities.
To those who share the Calasancian Educational Mission
Of the Daughters of the Divine Shepherdess
To those who feel attracted by the Calasancian Charism
Of the Daughters of the Divine Shepherdess,
Bequeathed by Saint Faustino Miguez of the Incarnation.**

J.R.E.N.C.

We begin Lent 2023 by placing in the Lord's hands everything that troubles us in our lives. It is the attitude of the believer who opens himself/herself to a God who welcomes human misery, touches it and transforms it into signs of life.

During Lent we seek in a special way the face of the Lord, a God who looks at us, has compassion and saves. And we want to resemble him with a double gaze: to look inward, to look at what within ourselves needs to be cured, healed. And to look at others and at the world around us, in order to contribute, through prayer, witness and concrete works, everything that can humanize it and bring it closer to Jesus.

We want to live Lent as a time to renew our faith. It is to feel God's passage through us, to convert our hearts and prepare ourselves to celebrate the Lord's Passover, the encounter with the risen Christ.

Lent leads us along the paths of mercy. And mercy springs from the heart of God and touches the hearts of people, and communicates life to them. Therefore, to feel God's love and mercy in our lives restores us and gives us strength to overcome what has been lost and wounded, what has not been accepted or forgiven.

The Word of God opens for us paths of growth, mercy and hope, from the profound experience of a compassionate and merciful God, as we recite in so many psalms (Ps 102, 144, 24). Lent is a propitious time to draw closer to the Word of God and to listen, in silence, to what it teaches us about mercy, with ourselves and with others.

When we experience God's love in our own lives, the doors of mercy open to others and to the world. We allow ourselves to be touched by the pain and misery of others, by the pain of humanity in difficult and complex situations. We do not cease to think and pray for the war in Ukraine and so many others that are open, or for the pain caused and still felt by the earthquake in Turkey and Syria, hunger, ecological crises and so many other situations that are in our minds and in our hearts.

The Holy Spirit knows how to stir the guts of each one of us and how to move us in the face of the suffering reality in order to fill us with compassion and solidarity.

It is a matter of accompanying the fragility of others in the way of Jesus, approaching those who suffer, feeling compassion and getting involved. It is to look at reality as Jesus would, because in it God speaks to us. Let us remember the merciful gaze of the Lord in his encounters with the Samaritan woman, the adulterous woman, the sick, the Syrophenician woman, Zacchaeus, the lepers, the man born blind, his friend Lazarus, and Matthew. Mercy welcomes and integrates everyone.

Nor did St. Faustino pass by in his encounter with the women who accompanied the girls who had no opportunity to study, or with the sick who sought health, or with so many believers who came to receive forgiveness. St. Faustino created the space to meet with them, he looked at them, felt compassion and got involved. He practiced listening and counselling, he studied intensely to discover medicines that could restore health to many, and he committed himself to the education of women. St. Faustino knew how to show the face of God's mercy.

Lent is a time that invites us to do good, to practice good works. It is the response of a merciful heart, which is incarnated in the concrete and daily, which becomes close, which accompanies, which commits itself.

To have mercy is a gift, a grace to ask God for. It is a deep look of love that discovers the capacities of the other, that stimulates paths of growth and maturation, that broadens the gaze and widens the fraternity. It fosters new relationships, of brothers and sisters, it impels us to small services and details, and not to stop doing good. It is the mystery of encounter and fraternity. And each one of us will know at every moment to have the opportune word and the kind action that accompanies it.

In this Lent let us let kindness, compassion, tenderness and joy flow among us. May our hearts be open to the world, to the poor, the wounded and the marginalized, and may we have attitudes of solidarity and humanization with them.

Mary of Nazareth goes in haste to the mountain to bring about encounters, to care for her cousin Elizabeth. She sings of God's mercy and considers herself gazed upon, blessed and magnified by his love. We ask her today, for this Lent, to teach us to recognize the goodness and love of God on this journey towards Easter.

With fraternal greetings



A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'M.ª José Sotelo'.

M. Mª José Sotelo Iglesias
Superior General