

**213° GENERAL CHAPTER  
OF THE ORDER OF THE FRIARS SERVANTS OF ST. MARY**



**«MAY IT BE DONE TO ME  
ACCORDING TO YOUR WORD»  
(Lk 1,38)**



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## THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER

### Presentation of the 2013 General Chapter Marian Document

**“Be it done to me according to your Word” (Lk 1, 38).**

*Servites and Mary, the very image of those who live  
by listening and witnessing to the Word.*

This is a synthesis of the genesis, evolution and content of the Servite Marian Document approved by the General Chapter of Elections celebrated at our priory and sanctuary in Pietralba (Bolzano) September 13 – October 2, 2013. The document will soon be published in all the languages in which the Servite Order and Family to assist them in their service of witness and evangelization.

The Prior General and his Council asked the Presidential Council to prepare a Marian document. The Presidential Council established a committee to perform out this task. The committee was made up of the following professors from the Marianum Pontifical Theological Faculty: Silvano M. Maggiani, Salvatore M. Perrella (chief editor) Fabrizio M. Bosin, Ricardo M. Pérez Marques and Gian Matteo Roggio (a La Salette religious). Father Roggio is the assistant to Professor Perrella and the secretary of the Dogma and Mariology Department (Cf. *Lettera del Preside* prot. 32/09). Eventually Professors Cettina Militello and Maria Mascheretti joined this group. A working paper [*Instrumentum Laboris*] was prepared for the 213th General Chapter of Friar Servants of Mary entitled *Behold the Handmaid of the Lord: Be it done unto me according to your word (Lk 1, 38)*. This working aid was intended “to promote discussion among the friars but especially the Chapter members of those matters that are important in our life.”<sup>1</sup> The *Instrumentum laboris* was an inspiration for our own Marian Document. From the time we first appeared in the history of the Church and mankind Mary has been our inspiration and guide as disciples of the Son of God and the Son of Man. In the fruitful silence of her mind and heart she heard, accepted, meditated on the Word of God and the values it implied. She lived these values and gave exemplary witness to them. Being Servites we are “linked to all those who have made this journey in the past; we are linked to the Order’s present and to its unknown future – the time of the Kingdom that will come and life in all its forms will flourish.”<sup>2</sup>

Servants of Mary have been inspired by the original image of Mary at the Annunciation and have been guided by the Word of Faith (Cf. *Rom* 10,8), and her contemplation of the mystery of Christ. In their spiritual journey Servites have also turned to Mary at the foot of the Cross (Cf. *Jn* 19, 25-27), the *Mater Dolorosa* who “shares the mission of the suffering Servant of Yahweh and is joined to his glory.”<sup>3</sup> Servite Marian devotion has embraced<sup>3</sup> the image of Our Lady of Sorrows, the *Pietà*, with a variety of popular practices: the Seven Dolor Rosary, the celebration of the *Compassio Virginis*, and the *Via Matris*. This last devotion started outside the Order but the enthusiasm and love with which we have embraced and popularized it among the faithful certainly makes it a devotion of the Servite Order and Family.<sup>4</sup> The mystery that links Mary at the Annunciation to Our Lady of Sorrows provides the original charism of the Servite vocation. It is the destiny to which the Church repeatedly calls the Order through renewal and *aggiornamento*. The link between these

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<sup>1</sup> ORDINE DEI FRATI SERVI DI MARIA, “Ecco, la serva del Signore: avvenga per me secondo la Tua parola: (Lc 1, 38) *Instrumentum laboris*, March 19, 2013, no. 2 in *Acta Ordinis Servorum B. Mariae Virginis* 14 (2013), p. 355; for the whole document Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 355-363.

<sup>2</sup> GIOVANNI MARIA VANNUCCI, *Esercizi spirituali*, Mondadori, Milano 2000, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> *Constitutions OSM*, art. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. SILVANO MAGGIANI, *Addolorata*, in STEFANO DE FIORES – SALVATORE MEO (edit.) *Nuovo Dizionario di Mariologia*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 1985, pp. 3-16; MARIA MAURA MURARO-MARIA MARCELLIINA PEDICO, *Addolorata*, in STEFANO DE FIORES – VALERIA FERRARI SCHIEFER – SALVATORE MARIA PERRELLA (edit.) *Mariologia*. I Dizionari, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2009, pp. 6-16.

two images of Mary must be a total and constant characteristic of our consecrated life and our mission of evangelization as we spread the Kingdom in today's world. The Church urges Servants of Mary to be men and women in today's world who can "help see more clearly the link between Mary of Nazareth and the faith-filled hearing of God's word. I would encourage scholars as well to study the relationship between Mariology and the theology of the word. This could prove most beneficial both for the spiritual life and for theological and biblical studies. Indeed, what the understanding of the faith has enabled us to know about Mary stands at the heart of Christian truth. The incarnation of the word cannot be conceived apart from the freedom of this young woman who by her assent decisively cooperated with the entrance of the eternal into time. Mary is the image of the Church in attentive hearing of the word of God, which took flesh in her. Mary also symbolizes openness to God and others; an active listening which interiorizes and assimilates, one in which the word becomes a way of life." (BENEDICT XVI, *Verbum Domini*, no. 27). Without a close link between Mariology and theology of the word the Order cannot exist. We must make the "Mary of Scripture" better known. We can do this by promoting *Lectio Divina* – a practice already existing in many of the Order's communities. We must make it a familiar form of prayer for all the people of God. Through *Lectio* we are like Mary, who meditated on the saving mysteries of God in Jesus Christ. During the 2008 Synod the Bishops wrote the Mother of the Incarnate Word "is a symbol for us of the faith of the simple and of the teachers of the Church who seek, discuss and define how to proclaim the Gospel" (*The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church. Instrumentum laboris*, no. 25). Like the documents prepared for previous Chapters, *Do whatever he tells you* (1983) and *Servants of the Magnificat* (1995) this new Marian Document is addressed to all our brothers and sisters in the Servite Order and Family. It is also addressed to the local churches where the Servite Family carries out its service of special witness with bishops, priests, deacons and lay people. The document is similarly addressed to all those male and female religious whose consecration to the God of Christ is inspired by his Mother. It is also intended for all men and women who venerate with affection and admiration Mary, she who is blessed because she believed (Cf. *Lk* 1,45). The document is entitled *Be it done unto me according to your word* - the motto of the 213th General Chapter. The editor and the committee have added a meaningful subtitle: *Servites and Mary who is the image of those who live listening and witnessing to the Word*.

The Order is a living cell of the Church and the prologue is careful to place the chapter document in the specific theological and historical moment in which we find ourselves. It sees the Order and the Servite Family as part of a larger whole. Our development depends on the bonds we share with the Church and the human family. We made an effort to avoid self-absorption. Our bonds can and should be under the sign of the Word. If the Church is to be faithful to the promise of the Second Vatican Council it cannot ignore the spiritual life of believers and religious. It must be based and focused upon prayerful attention to the "living", "effective", and "incisive" Word (Cf. *Heb* 4, 12-13) as experienced in the tension and from the perspective of witness and service in the image of the Lord's handmaid.

**Part One** (nos. 15-38) is entitled "*Hear O Israel.*" *Word and Identity*. It examines the *human* and *theological* links between Israel and Mary of Nazareth. Both receive the Word and cannot be understood apart from the inexhaustible dynamism of *Revelation* and *Faith*. The Order of Servants of Mary can be seen as an *ecclesial form* of the link between Israel and Mary – a *charismatic form* of the event of *revelation* and *faith*: the original image of *Mary at the Annunciation*. To return to the essential, foundational link between the Word and Our Lady means returning to salvation history and Israel's faith witness. Mary is a daughter of the people of Israel, "and from them, according to the flesh, is the Messiah. God who is over all be blessed forever. Amen." (*Rom* 9,5).

The poet, Davide M. Turollo (+ 1992) writes this: “The Virgin Mother is a synthesis of creation, a sign of the fullness of grace; a synthesis of the history of Israel: the true Daughter of Zion; she is both the image and perfection of the new Israel: the Church. She is beauty that becomes the quest for and dispensation of grace through a life or prayer and invocation. Her life is worship, an act of love.”<sup>5</sup>

**Part Two** (nos. 39-75) is entitled “*Mary got up and went ...*”. *Word and Action*. It explores the Gospel account (primarily Luke) of Mary’s pilgrimage of faith (*Peregrinatio fidei*) initiated and caused by the incarnation of the Word. The Second Vatican Council Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum* tells us that Revelation represents a substantial not accidental link between event and word. In the light of this Mary’s *peregrinatio fidei* is seen as the quest for, acceptance and understanding of the events and words caused first by the presence of her son, Jesus and later by his actions. Consequently the Order and the Servite Family show their vitality by following the same path: quest for, acceptance and understanding of the *signa Christi* to be found in the life of the Church and mankind. Accepting the other as a sign of the God who speaks allowed Mary to sing the *Magnificat* (Cf. *Lk 1, 46-55*). The canticle is the fruit of communion, the encounter of believers who can pool the gifts they have received and exchange their personal histories of faith (Cf. *Rom 12, 3-21*). The *Magnificat* of the Mother of the Word shows us that sharing our faith histories is a Gospel *responsibility and educational and formative challenge* for the whole Church.

**Part Three** (nos. 76-100) is entitled “*They stood near Jesus’ Cross ...*”. *Word and Silence*. This section focuses on the culmination of the *peregrinatio fidei* of the woman from Nazareth: her presence at the foot of the Cross as describe by John. This made her the *Mater Dolorosa* (Cf. *Jn 19,25-27*). Her presence, however, in the newly born post-Easter community in Jerusalem made her the *Mater Ecclesiae* (Cf. *Acts 1,14*). The Order and the Servite Family must find in this paradoxical and scandalous *Gospel Silence* the source of its fruitfulness in the Spirit. Through this fruitfulness the One who was both humiliated and exalted joins us to the work of the Church. This is the sacrament of the Kingdom in history and beyond history. Its ultimate and longed for destination is the Triune bosom of God. For natural men (Cf. *1 Cor 2, 11-14*) word and silence are opposites and mutually exclusive. The former is a synonym for life and action, the later for death and inaction. For those who are led by the Spirit of God the word flows into silence and silence becomes a form of word. Silence is no longer the synonym of death and inactivity it is rather the source of life, action, redemption and salvation. The Trinity itself is living and working silence. It is a silence that saves and reveals itself in parable to those who pay attention and listen (Cf. *Lk 8, 18*). Among those present is the Mother of Jesus (Cf. *Lk 8, 19-21; 11, 27-28*). The Church too is present as are the disciples and her Servants in her, with her and through her. Servants of Mary are called “to manifest the gift of compassion to the world. They do this not just as an aspect of their ministerial and sacramental service but as a result of their Marian inspiration [...] Compassion and mercy are recognized characteristics of Servites who continue in their own lives the example and presence of the Mother of God (Cf. *Constitutions OSM 52*). The various stages of Mary’s vocation celebrated in the liturgy and in popular devotion inspire us to accept the Word of God in the very different circumstances of our own pilgrimage especially in times of suffering – the days of the Cross.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> DAVIDE MARIA TUROLLO, *Laudario alla Vergine: “Via pulchritudinis”*, EDB, Bologna 1980, p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> ORDINE DEI FRATI SERVI DI MARIA, “*Ecco la serva del Signore: avvenga per me second la tua parola (Lc 1, 38)*”. *Instrumentum laboris*, no. 16, in *Acta Ordinis Servorum B. Mariae Virginis Nova Series* 14 (2013), no. 19, p. 360.

The **Epilogue** (nos. 101-115) is a résumé of the three preceding sections. It focuses on two Marian images that represent the Church: the Mother of the Living (*Mater viventium*) in Genesis (Cf. *Gen* 3, 15) and the Woman clothed with the sun in the Apocalypse (Cf. *Apoc* 12, 1). Servite liturgical tradition celebrates the solemnity of Our Lady of Sorrows; it considers and addresses her as principal Patron of the Order. This tradition envisions the “great sign in heaven” (Cf. *Apoc* 12,1) as a manifestation that recapitulates the fruitful mystery of Christ’s hour and that of his Kingdom (Cf. *Jn* 2, 1-12; 19, 25-27). In that hour Mary of Nazareth, the Mother of the one destined not to become dust (Cf. *Gen* 3,19) nor be eaten by the dragon (Cf. *Apoc* 12, 4) but to ascend to God and his throne (Cf. *Apoc* 12, 5) became our mother until “until all families of people, whether they are honored with the title of Christian or whether they still do not know the Savior, may be happily gathered together in peace and harmony into one people of God, for the glory of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity.” (Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 69).

This “great sign” calls on the Order and the Servite Family to become a community of *hope* that lives humanly and theologically by *listening, deciding* and *acting*.

The Epilogue concludes with a trust and hope fostered by the Word of God. Our Lady of the *Fiat* was always an example of this trust.

We are convinced that this new Marian Document, “*Let it be done unto me according to your Word*” (*Lk* 1, 38). *Servites and Mary, the image of those who live listening and giving witness to the Word*” will contribute to a theological, religious and spiritual rebirth for the whole Servite Family. In our efforts to follow the One Necessary we have as our guide Our Lady of the *Fiat* and as our style Mary’s example as a believer in the God of Jesus Christ. This is the fervent wish Pope Francis expressed in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*.

Salvatore M. Perrella, osm  
Preside