

Homily 2022 08 16 tues ord20 – Canossian Sisters chapter

Today, the topic for your chapter is the “Call of God” – for the Congregation, for the all the Canossian sisters and all who work with you in mission. We ask what the call of God is for us at this particular time in human history, in a wounded world that has been living through a pandemic, through so many wars and acts of violence in many places, through sufferings because of poverty and inequality and injustice, through the ravaging of the environment, the Earth, our Common Home. To ask about the call of God at this time is a big topic, that will require much discussion and reflection.

So for now, we begin with something more modest, by taking the readings for today’s Eucharist, and drawing from them two very basic reminders about the call of God.

The first reminder about the Call of God is simple – that it is God who calls. It is God who initiates and sustains. Our first task is to listen. Unlike the King of Tyre whom the prophet Ezekiel rebukes in the first reading, because he claims to have the mind of God, he dares to play God, he no longer listens.

Listening to God is to listen in prayer, and listening in prayer is not as easy as it seems. It means blocking out so many noises in our lives – the noise of negativity, the noise that comes from fear or anger or despair, the noise of being stuck in our routines, the noise of secularism and attachments, the noise of conflict in our religious communities, the noise that come from our personal histories and our families and our long-held prejudices and our preconceived notions of what is good. And so, we pray for the grace of a deep silence – so we can hear God’s call on two levels – first, the call that we hear, deep in our hearts in our personal prayer, and second, the call we hear by listening to each other with respect and openness.

The second reminder can be seen in the Gospel. The Lord tells us that it would be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the Kingdom of God. He tells his apostles that those who give up houses or brothers or sisters, or father or mother or children or lands for the sake of His name will receive a hundred times more, and will inherit eternal life.

This second reminder is not just about being poor or rich. It is not just about giving up material things or personal relationships or lofty ambitions. It is not just about religious poverty. The call of God here is much deeper – it is a call to radical dependence, to trust in His love and His grace.

We remind ourselves of those moments when God called Abraham and Moses, Mary and Joseph. When God called them, God gave no details. Instead all they got were general orientations – for Abraham to leave his homeland, for Moses to set his people free, for Mary to bear a son, and for Joseph to accept Mary as his wife. No details, no clear endpoint, no hints about the difficulties that will come, no certainties

or predictable outcomes. Just an invitation to trust and not to fear, to be open to new experiences and new ideas, to be open to challenges and difficulties

Dear sisters, today the first call of God is to listen and to listen well, in personal prayer and in hearing each other out, knowing that God speaks to each one. The second call of God is to a radical dependence and trust, that overpowers all fear and doubt. It is a call to you in this chapter, to consider what to keep and what to change, to be open to new frontiers, to go on and plan and make resolutions and chart out paths for the congregation. But it is also a call to do all this in a profound peace, trusting that God will guide you along the way to a future that is probably beyond any of your preparations, beyond any of your expectations, and maybe even beyond your imagination.