



SOCIETY OF
SAINT TERESA
of Jesus

Saragossa, October 15, 2023

Dear Teresian Family:

With joy I write to you on this special day when we celebrate and give thanks for the life of St. Teresa of Jesus. She was a woman of the 16th century who knew how to respond to the demands of her time, highlighting the value of friendship and communion as an essential part of our relationship with God and humanity. Today she continues to inspire our following of Jesus and our journey as Church. Let us turn our eyes and our hearts to this teacher of life, to the friend and companion who, through her personal and community experience, continues to show us the way towards God's dream: a reconciled and fraternal humanity where we recognize ourselves as one family.

This year we celebrate her feast day with two events that challenge us as a family:

The XVIII General Chapter of the Society of St. Teresa of Jesus concluded in Tortosa on September 30. Our experience, as a community attentive to the Spirit and to reality, strengthened the invitation to continue to grow in awareness of our community identity. We are aware of the increasing disengagement in our world, the weakening of the sense of belonging, and the breakdown of the bonds of community. We want to continue on this path of conversion, through a synodal way of living and relating, collaborating with others in the search for the common good and in the construction of global citizenship.

The second event that challenges us is the celebration of the first assembly of the Synod on Synodality, currently taking place in Rome, to which the Pope has summoned a large number of diverse participants. It is an expression of a Church that experiences within herself the differences, polarities, and contradictions of society and whose mission is to reconcile, to encourage peaceful and creative ways of living together, and to celebrate diversity. It is an event that shows us it is possible to listen to each other and to dialogue, even with people who think very differently. It invites us to open ourselves to welcome diversity and continue to widen our tent so that there is room for everyone.

At this moment in the history of the Church and our Teresian family let us be inspired once again by Teresa of Jesus. She understood that her best contribution to the Church and to the society of her time was living her identity as a friend of God through which she was able to live an authentic communion. With the reform of Carmel Teresa thought of a new way of living in community which today we would say was marked by a synodal style. She wanted her communities to have a smaller number of sisters to encourage close relationships among them, times for sharing and prayer, and the participation of all. She was convinced that mutual collaboration was part of the apostolate of each one and the only way to establish relationships based on equality, love and service: "Here all must BE FRIENDS, all must love each other, all must help each other" (WP 4,7).

Moreover, this experience of communion transcended the limits of each convent, strengthening community and family ties among all the monasteries, and furthermore, ensuring that they did not ignore the problems of the world and that these problems were always present in their minds, hearts and prayers.

[...] This is why He has gathered you here. This is your vocation. These must be the business matters you're engaged in. These must be the things you desire, the things you weep about, these your petitions ... The world is all in flames ... and are we to waste time asking for things that if God were to give them we would have one less soul in heaven? No, my Sisters, this is not the time to discussing with God matters that have little importance. (WP 1, 5).

The reform that she undertook gradually spread and opened up to others with whom she wove a great network of relationships between strong friends of God. Her letters and lengthy conversations - today we would speak of community discernments - made it possible for her transforming action to influence the social and political sphere beyond the community space of each convent.

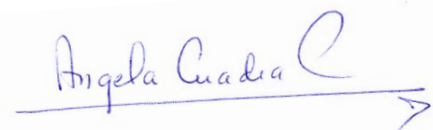
Seek friendships and associations with other people who have the same interest. This is something most important even though the association may be only to help one another with prayers. The more of these prayers there are, the greater the gain! (Life 7,20)

Just as the Spirit prompted Teresa of Jesus in her time, today the Spirit urges us *to do that little bit that is in us*, and resolve to assume personally and co-responsibly the invitation to promote universal communion and synodality, collaborating with others in the task of restoring the social landscape in order to humanize our world.

Before concluding, I would like to invite you to join in thanksgiving for the celebration of the 150 years of the TAM. For a year you have been preparing for this celebration with the theme "Our history makes us strong". We pray that the history you have yet to build together will be full of dreams and of projects of life and solidarity that generate hope in each context. May it be filled with men and women who seek friendship with God and are capable of giving themselves generously in the service of others.

I finish with the words of Henry de Ossó, "I have *shared fellowship with your Society and share in its joys and sorrows*. Let us begin this new stage recognizing that we walk together while encouraging hope.

A big sisterly hug,



Ángela Cuadra Cuadra
General Coordinator