

II MEETING OF HOSPITALLERS OF AFRICA Dapaong, December 8th-16th, 2017

“Africa keeps the lamp of hospitality turned on”



GREETING

Muy queridas hermanas, très chères sœurs, dears sisters, queridas irmãs

Bienvenidas, bienvenues, welcome, bem-vindas...

I welcome you joyfully to this **II Meeting of the Hospitallers of Africa** that, this time, we realize in this city of Dapaong (Togo). Thank you, above all, to all the sisters of the Hospitaller Committee of Africa (CHAF) and those of the communities of Togo who, with such affection, organized everything for us to feel at home.

It is precisely **three years since we met in Elmina** (Ghana) at the First Meeting of Hospitallers of Africa. By the slogan *“Africa, keeps the lamp of hospitality turned on”*, we had the chance to get acquainted with each other and know the presence of Congregation in this continent, its riches, diversity and challenges. The evaluation of this event, unique for its features, was very positive and, in the end, sisters asked to continue these meetings to follow up the reflection started about our life and mission, looking for ways of cooperation and projecting possible path of revitalization and restructuring for the hospitaller presence in Africa.

Now, we meet in **Dapaong, the northern city of Togo**, the capital of the “savanes” region. Its location, close to three borders (Burkina Faso, Niger and Benin) make it an important commercial point, with a great exchange of merchandise and products produced in the agricultural activities such as cotton, corn and tomato.

The first sisters of the **Congregation of Hospitaller Augustin of the Immaculate Conception** arrived in this city in the 1962. The sisters have developed many assistance activities, with special attention to the maternal and child healthcare, pediatrics, care for people with aids, consultation service for people with mental illness, etc. These activities have aroused great admiration and recognition in the people and the local Church, for the hospitality so generously given.

As everybody knows, in the 2011 we celebrated the merger with this Congregation, a God’s gift that we welcome with gratitude and hope, responsibly taking the mission of remaining faithful to the **charism of hospitality that unites us**.

We meet in this **geographical, ecclesial and congregational context** to live this second Meeting of Hospitaller of Africa. In order for it to be an event of grace, let us place our heart in the free and sincere search, in the fraternal communion, the Samaritan sensitivity, the desire to “succeed with the will of God” as St. Benedict Menni tells us.

According to the project developed by the CHAF, **one of the priorities of the process** we are carrying out is the **awareness and communication/information at all levels**, involving especially the Superiors and formators as key persons of this **“Abrahams journey”** which put us in the “dynamics of departure” towards the land that the Lord shows us.

The document **Re create the Hospitality** (XX General Chapter) calls us to live as a "congregational body" the process of restructuring and revitalization¹ and trusts, to those who perform the service of animation and government, the mission of accompanying the sisters, communities, provinces and the Congregation.

Our mission, sisters, is great, to **accompany (from Latin "com" =with, together; + "panis" =bread)** which means share the same bread, the bread of joys and hopes, the bread of illusions and passions, the bread of difficulties and discouragements, the bread that is hospitality.... A mission that we have to live since two **vital dynamics** of which the document scrutinized tells us:

- **In an obedient exodus**, rereading the path of consecrated life as a true "path of the exodus", a time of enthusiasm and audacity, of invention and creative fidelity, but also of fragile certainties, of improvisations and bitter disappointments²; a path focused on the Gospel, the supreme rule of the Sequela Christi, in creative fidelity to the spirit of the Founders and in constant and necessary discernment of the signs of the times and places;
- **In an attentive wakefulness**, recovering the prophetic character and exploring the new horizons of the consecrated life; being ready to discover the signs of God: *"Our faith is challenged to glimpse the wine which can be turned into water. We fight against the eyes full of sleep (cf. Lc 9,32) in order not to lose the capacity to discern the movement of the cloud which guides our path (cf. Nm 9,17) and acknowledge in the small and fragile signs the presence of the Lord of the life and hope"*³.

We all come to this meeting with our expectations; certainly we have to take a few more steps and carry out some projects that mobilize us; but the most important thing is that we come to assume from inside, from the mission of animation and government and formation that we carry out, that our role is fundamental for the progress of this process. Courage sisters "let us go forward, but calmly and confidently".

Let us do it under the **benevolent gaze of Mary**, the Immaculate Virgin, Our Lady of The Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Virgin of Visitation who guides our steps in the "Practice of Hospitality", may She helps us to keep the lamp of hospitality turned on

In communion with the whole Congregation, who send us their prayers and messages, I wish you; wish us, HAVE A NICE MEETING!

Anabela Carneiro HSC
General Superior
Dapaong (Togo), December 8th, 2017

¹ HOSPITALLER SISTERS, *Recreate Hospitality. Paths of revitalization*, Rome, 2012 (= RH)

² CIVCSVA, *Escrutad*, Roma 2014, 3.

³ CIVCSVA, *Escrutad*, Roma 2014, 7.