

## 150 YEARS OF HISTORY IN ACTION

"Great and unfathomable are the designs of God", said Sister Maria Clara in her last letter, after an intense experience of God who accomplishes His plans, opening new paths for us to undertake.

God wanted it so. This dream of Raimundo and Clara was born a 150 years ago: a religious Congregation that was and is a response to the most pressing human needs, as in the past and even today. The inviting voice of God that echoed then, is being heard now, in the situations of the world: *Whom shall I send? And who will go for Us?* [cf. Is 6:8]

And behold, the prompt response of countless young girls to this Divine voice traversed through time and is ushering into eternity! This response full of audacity and fidelity has woven together the 150 years of history, illumined and warmed by lives dedicated to the mission they received, with the privilege to: "go and be with the poor, as apostles of Mercy, teaching them to love - the sure way to eternal glory". [Cf. Writings of Raimundo and Maria Clara].

In response to God's continuous appeals throughout the 150 years of the existence of our Congregation of the Franciscan Hospitaller Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, which is His gift to the Church and to the world, we wish to contemplate and celebrate, in this period that is before us until May 3, 2021, the culminating moment of the Jubilee Year, the great deeds that the Lord has done and still does, for us and through us, helping us to build a promising future that we all dream of! Each month, from October to May, we will recall a story from the past which will enlighten the present and help us to move into the future, by the breath of the Spirit.

Let us keep in mind a note from our chronicler, Sr. Maria da Saudade de Jesus. She gives us the key to read all the little flowers that will follow. The key is: *The power of God is revealed in fragility!*

And so says Sister Saudade who was part of our humble origins, who saw and experienced the power of God within her:

*Our Congregation is a beautiful flower, which our Lord has made to bloom in the garden of the Holy Church, and which He Himself has watered and cultivated until He transformed it into this leafy tree which we admire today, standing firm and unwavering, supported by God who will never cease to guide it.*

The vision of our Chronicler is enthralling. A contemplative vision that springs from a mystical heart can only be realistic.

Let us rejoice in the Lord, always with the certainty that everything comes from the goodness of God which, over the course of the 150 years, has been engraved in the historical pages of our beloved Congregation. Let us affirm with our Chronicler, that the love, zeal and mercy of God has brought us to this point and, we have the hope that He will lead us into the shadow of His light, and guide us on the path He desires for us.