

Fashioned by the Eucharist



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FASHIONED BY THE EUCHARIST

Sacrifice in the Jewish tradition

The term '**sacrifice**' comes from the Latin 'sacrum' meaning 'sacred' and 'facere' 'to make'. So, sacrifice originally meant taking something ordinary and making it holy. Sacrifices were mainly offered to express one's gratitude for benefits received, or for new favours, or to appease God's wrath for the offences committed, or to restore broken relationship between God and the offender.

Through votive offerings of firstlings, tithes, or objects of value, libations of drinks poured out to the gods, or through bloody sacrifices man consecrated himself to the deity. "*Whatever touches the oblations becomes sacred*" (Lev 6: 11). God accepts the gift, the worship, the giver. What is given becomes God's; it is consecrated, and participates in God's holiness. And in the measure in which man, in his gift, has given himself to God, man shares through God's acceptance in His holiness and goodness.

By sacrifice man offers himself and his life to God, his sovereign Lord and Creator. The sacrifice was an acknowledgement that all life comes from God as gift to us and we offer it back to God as our gift to him, thus establishing and maintaining a healthy relationship with God. Because a living being dies when it loses most of its blood, the ancients regarded blood as the seat and sign of life, and therefore as sacred. Sacrifice of an animal was a symbolic act which substituted the victim's life for the life of the offerer, who thus acknowledged that he deserved God's punishments for his sins. The sacred meal at which the offerer and his guests partook of the meat of the sacrificed animal was an ancient banquet of friendship and alliance with God.

Three kinds of sacrifice were offered in the Old Testament: holocaust, communion and atonement. According to the book of Leviticus in a **holocaust sacrifice** (Lev 1) a male animal was totally burned with oil, incense and aromatic herbs: the fragrant smoke rising up symbolizing that this sacrifice was being offered to God. Man's absolute submission to God finds its expression in the burnt offering (holocaust). The complete destruction of the victim aptly signified the totality and irrevocability of the gift.

Communion sacrifice or peace offering (Lev. 3) was offered to give thanks, to petition God or to establish relationships. The communion sacrifice included a religious meal and this feeling of eating with God provided a sense of union or 'communion' with God. The **sacrifice of reparation** (Lev. 16) was used to atone for sin. On the feast of Yom Kippur - the Day of Atonement, a bull was slaughtered and the blood taken into the holy of holies by the High Priest and sprinkled on a plaque of pure gold resting on the ark of the covenant, a task performed only once a year. Blood symbolized life and the sprinkling of the blood on the gold plaque symbolized that communion of life was re-established between God and his people, that the covenant was restored, and that the sins of the people have been wiped clean so that now they can receive upon them the light that shines from the face of God.

Both “expiation” and “propitiation” are terms used of sacrifice. **Expiation** implies a sacrificial taking away of some sin or offence, whereas propitiation implies assuaging the anger or injured honor of God, when His love is contradicted and opposed. God’s love will not tolerate anything contrary to itself. It does not compromise with evil, or ignore evil. The wrath of God is propitiated when the disorder of sin is expiated. The wrath of God is removed (propitiation) when the sin that provokes it is abolished (expiation).

Propitiation (*propitiation*) appeals to the mercy of God and petition (*impetratio*) to His goodness. While petition is directed towards our spiritual and temporal concerns and needs of every kind, propitiation refers to our sins and to the temporal punishments, which must be expiated by works of repentance or atonement in this life, or otherwise by a corresponding suffering in purgatory.

The Letter to the Hebrews 9 - 10 shows how this concept is applied to Christ who offered Himself on the Cross, as a holocaust - a total sacrifice, to the Father, how his blood is the principle of the new and everlasting covenant and the atonement of sins, and how he is the ultimate reparation sacrifice. The Letter makes it very clear that **the sacrifice that Jesus made by his death has now replaced all the animal sacrifices** that were regularly offered in earlier times. “Christ entered once for all into the sanctuary, not with the blood of goats and calves but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.” (Heb 9:12)

1: The Eucharist as Sacrifice

*“The sacrifice of the altar, as the Council of Trent states, is not a mere commemoration of the sacrifice on the Cross, but the renewal of the same sacrifice; because the same Victim is offered to the Eternal Father and the same High Priest Jesus Christ offers it: it differs only in the manner of offering it, for the sacrifice offered on the cross was in a bloody manner. Therefore, **the Eucharist has the same dignity, the same excellence, the same infinite value as the sacrifice on the cross...***

We should remember that the holy sacrifice of the Mass is the unique act of worship which gives to God the glory that is due to Him, which renders Him thanks for his innumerable benefits, which expiates our sins, and which pleads for and obtains for us divine favours. To sum up, it is the supreme act of worship offered to God: latreutico (adoration), eucharistico (thanksgiving), espiatorio (expiation) and impetratorio (petition).”¹

In the early Church the prediction of Prophet Malachi was looked upon by Christians as a prophecy of the Eucharist: “*From the rising of the sun, even to its setting, my name is great among the nations, and everywhere they bring sacrifice to my name, and a pure offering, for great is my name among the nations* (Mal. 1:11).

John the Baptist pointed out Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1: 19). St. Thomas Aquinas sees Christ as the great high priest, immolating Himself as the victim, in each sacrifice of the Mass, as He did on the Cross. According to

¹ Seraphina: *Practical Guide*, Ch.IV

the doctrine on the Eucharist set forth by Council of Trent, the Eucharistic Sacrifice is the perfect propitiatory sacrifice we can offer to God: a sacrifice of praise and expiation (*sacrificium laetiticum et propitiatorium*), of thanks-giving and petition (*sacrificium Eucharisticum et impetratorium*). Referring to God the Mass is a sacrifice of adoration and thanks; referring to us the Mass is a sacrifice of propitiation and petition. Moreover, it is the perfect means for pardon, reconciliation and union with God.

“The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice.”² The Eucharist is the sacramental re-presentation of the Lord’s death and resurrection. It is the sacrifice of the Cross perpetuated down the ages. The sacrifice of Jesus is made present in the sacrifice of the Eucharist which applies to men and women of all ages the reconciliation won once for all by Christ. *“By virtue of its close relationship to the sacrifice of Golgotha, the Eucharist is a sacrifice in the strict sense... It makes present the sacrifice of the Cross. The memorial celebration makes Christ’s one, definitive redemptive sacrifice always present in time.”*³

The **purpose of the Eucharistic sacrifice** is to give glory to God, to thank Him, to obtain His mercy, and to ask Him for our needs. The Mass is first and foremost, a continuation of Christ's sacrifice of praise (adoration) and thanksgiving to God the Father. No less than He did on Calvary, in the Mass Jesus continues to offer Himself to the heavenly Father. But, whereas on Calvary, this sacrificial adoration was bloody, causing Christ's physical death by crucifixion, in the Mass the same Jesus is now sacrificing Himself in an unbloody manner because he is now glorified, immortal, and incapable of suffering or dying in His own physical person.

The Mass is the eschatological, heavenly reality come to earth. Because the saints and angels worshipping the Lamb on His throne in heaven are present at each Mass, the liturgy is a “cosmic” reality which joins heaven and earth. *“In celebrating the sacrifice of the Lamb, we are united to the heavenly ‘liturgy’ and become part of that multitude which cries out: ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!’ The Eucharist is truly a glimpse of heaven appearing on earth.”*⁴

In the Eucharist Christ is present in a unique way. He is always present in a body of the faithful gathered in his name (Mt 18:20). He is present, too, in his Word, for it is he who speaks when the Scriptures are read in the Church. In the sacrifice of the Eucharist he is present both in the person of the minister, *“the same now offering through the ministry of the priest who formerly offered himself on the cross,”* and above all under the species of the Eucharist.”⁵

For St. Francis the Holy Mass was **a sublime mystery of grace**, as he pointed out to his friars with this burning exclamation: *“Let everyone be struck with fear, let the whole world tremble, and let the heavens exalt when Christ, the Son of the living God, is present on the altar in the hands of a priest!”*⁶

²*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1367

³ Cf. St. John Paul II: *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (EE), n. 12

⁴ EE n. 19

⁵Sacred Congregation of Rites, *Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Ministry*, #9

⁶St. Francis of Assisi: *Letter to the Order* 26

As the Franciscan Friar Kenan B. Osborne says, “*Only when we begin to understand the Eucharist as a time when Jesus is not distant, but close; not aloof, but very intimate; not above us, but profoundly near us; not judging us, but compassionate toward us, will we truly be able to relate this teaching of the Church to our faith and devotion.*”⁷

Reflection:-

- ♥ What does offering myself as a “living sacrifice” mean to me?(Rom12:1)
- ♥ “***No one shall appear before the Lord empty-handed***” (Dt 16:16).
 - How can I offer myself as a living sacrifice?
 - Do I extend my act of offering myself on the pattern into my everyday activity?
 - Or am I often ruled by my craving for pleasure, power, position, possession, prestige etc.?
 - Do I make a conscious effort to mortify my craving for tasty food/ juicy news/ serials unbecoming of a consecrated person?
- ♥ Is the Eucharist — *the total gift of Jesus*, the vital power and motivating spirit that gives meaning to what I am and what I do?

1.1: Eucharist: the most powerful means to obtain propitiation for sin

*“As our Lord Jesus Christ became man and immolated himself on the cross and continues to offer himself daily in the Eucharist for the salvation of the souls, so too the Clarist Franciscan Missionaries of the Blessed Sacrament, following His example, should **devote themselves to expiation** and to apostolate, **offering themselves as victims along with Jesus Christ for the Church and for the souls.**”⁸*

The Sacrifice of the Mass is not merely an offering of praise and thanksgiving, or simply a memorial of the sacrifice on the Cross. It is a **propitiatory sacrifice** which is offered for the living and dead, for the remission of sins and punishment due to sin, as satisfaction for sin and for other necessities. Through the Mass, God's mercy removes the guilt of repented venial sins and moves the sinner estranged from Him to return to God. Besides, remitted more or less is the punishment still due on earth to forgiven sins, as well as the punishment which the souls in purgatory have to undergo before entering heaven. In both these respects the impetratory and expiatory Sacrifice of the Mass is of the greatest utility, both for the living and the dead.

*“What does Jesus teach us from behind the mysterious veil of the tabernacle? He teaches us immolation, atonement and apostolate. **Present on our altars as the Victim, Jesus makes a continuous immolation of himself to the eternal Father ... But for whom does He immolate Himself? For whom does He make reparation? For all the human beings created by him, for whose sake – not being content with having***

⁷Kenan B. Osborne O.F.M., *Sacramental Guidelines: A Companion to the New Catechism for Religious Educators* p. 80

⁸*Constitutions of the CFMSS (1913): Art. 5*

made himself His brethren, or lived a hidden life for 30 years, evangelized the world with his teachings for three years, died on the cross shedding his blood to the last drop – he has willed to remain among us in the infinite charity of his most loving heart, gifting us with his flesh and blood.”⁹

The term ‘atonement’ expresses better than any other word the whole act by which man is made ‘at-one-ness’ with God through, with and in Christ. According to St. Anselm the atonement is an offering to God, reconciling sinful humanity to God. The self-giving of Christ in obedience to the Father is an atonement of satisfaction for the sin of humankind: an atonement of reconciliation and restoration to make all God's scattered children 'at-one-ness' with Him. As St. Ambrose says, “Christ is offered today and he Himself as priest offers himself in order that He may remit our sins.”

*“One makes atonement by means of sacrifice, prayer and penance ...But what is to be atoned for? Make reparation for one’s own infidelities, the sins of the whole world and in particular, the offences committed against Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar. The **expiatory acts** of the Franciscans of the Blessed Sacrament are exclusively directed towards this very aim.”¹⁰*

Christ’s act of atonement - his self-giving to God as atoning victim - involves the whole of his incarnate being and the whole of his incarnate living. Christ’s obedience and his sacrifice are two closely allied acts of worship. His sacrifice is the divinely accepted gift of himself in consecrated obedience. This sacrificial offering makes his whole life one integrated act of worship. It holds together every stage of his human life:all that he does and endures from the first moment of his giving. The tenth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews shows us Christ's obedience as the heart of his atoning sacrifice. “When he came into the world, he said, ‘sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight in. Then I said, ‘As it is written of me in the scroll, behold, I come to do your will, O God’” (Heb 10: 5 -7).

*“A **complete immolation of ourselves** to Jesus along with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, a continuous reparation, an indefatigable apostolate, should be the characteristics of our life.”¹¹*

The CFMSS are called to be an expiatory victim for their own infidelities as well as the sins of the whole humankind. Seraphina calls for our daily “immolation” – giving up our self-will and all egoistic tendencies and pursuits, offering up our entire being as a sacrifice acceptable to God – in expiation for our sins and those of others. To immolate ourselves in loving self-giving is our sharing in Christ’s immolation – his sacrificial self-giving. As consecrated persons we are expected to make satisfaction for our personal sins, offences and negligence as well as those of all the humankind: in particular for our co-sisters and family members, priests and religious persons, Christians and co-nationals. **Full participation in the Mass is our joining with the atoning will of Jesus** to give ourselves, with him and in him, to God our Father, as the supreme expression of our adoration and gratitude, our

⁹ 01.00.1901: *Secret of my Sanctification I:3*

¹⁰Nov-Dec 1897: The First Draft of the Constitutions, Chapter IV

¹¹Constitutions 1913: *Art. 3*

expiation and loving obedience. This is the effective expression of our desire to be “at one” with God our Father and to make all God's scattered children at one with him in the atoning Victim, the incarnate Son.

In the *fractio panis* (= **breaking of the bread**) during the Last Supper, Jesus says: “This is my Body”. Jesus broke himself, for our sake as Isaiah says, “He was pierced for our offences, crushed for our sins” (Is 53:5). So too we must “break” ourselves for the sake of others, that is, “lay before God all hardness, all rebellion towards Him or others, crush our pride, submit and say “yes” fully to all that God asks of us.” Break our body - our time, energy, attention and talents, in a word, our lives for our brethren. Shedding our ‘blood’ means that “we offer everything that “mortifies” us: criticisms, oppositions, humiliations, failures, sickness that cripples us, limitations due to age or health”¹²... so that others may have life, “life in abundance.” (Jn 10:10)

“Along with Jesus who surrendered himself to the Eternal Father in the Garden of Olives, let us offer ourselves as victims in the Eucharist and through other acts of expiation... Let us hide from others – even from ourselves, whatever aches we have and deny us all gratification... Let us gladly carry after Jesus the cross that Providence sends us today, bearing patiently with physical discomforts, or the inclement weather, or difficult persons.”¹³

The offering of the Body of Christ must be accompanied by the offering of one’s own body. “Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship” (Rom 12:1). Just as Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice of sweet odour, we have to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice acceptable to God – “a sweet-smelling oblation to the Lord” (Lev 2: 2), especially when we are faced with a difficult obedience, or when we are seething with rebellion. Our offering, therefore, must be our acts of surrender, expiation and, above all, “a humble, contrite heart” – the best thing that pleases God.

In Clare - "the saint of the Eucharist," Seraphina had the perfect model for making of her daily life an epitome of expiation and propitiation. "*Since in the austerity of her cloistered solitude, she broke the alabaster jar of her body with her severity, the whole Church was thoroughly imbued with the aroma of her sanctity.*"¹⁴

We have to do penance in order to expiate our guilt and restore the broken relationships with God and our sisters and brothers. Reparation is a call for personal realization of our sinfulness and sinful ways that estrange us from God and wound our brothers and sisters, and consequently, the willingness to make atonement for them. It calls for a radical change of heart and mind, a sweeping change of mentality and behaviour, amendment of our omissions and commissions by heart-felt sorrow and deeds of atonement in line with what Prophet Zechariah states (Zech 7:9-11). Such attitudinal change can come only by altering our mindset towards whole new ways of thinking and acting in line with the Eucharistic values. And for this grace, we need to cooperate with the Spirit of God.

¹² Cf. Raniero Cantalamessa: *The Eucharist, our Sanctification*, Ch. II

¹³ 05.06.1890: *Prayers and Acts of Mortification*, Fasc. XX

¹⁴ Pope Alexander IV: *Bull of Canonization of Clare*, 4

Writing to her pupils in the year 1881, Seraphina tells them to “*get ready for the ‘food of angels’ with pure hands and fervent hearts, to offer themselves as **perfect holocaust to the lamb** who feeds among the lilies*”.¹⁵ Offering oneself along with the Eucharistic victim on the Altar through a daily life of immolation, atonement, thanksgiving and surrender to God’s will, the **CFMSS are to become the lambs of God who take away the anger of the world.**

*“O Jesus, to atone, to love!... Convert these eyes of mine into two fountains of tears so that I may weep over your love and over my sins day and night...”*¹⁶

Sacrifice is an essential part of being Eucharistic persons. **Seraphina’s motto “Love, sacrifice, work”** evolved out of her understanding of the ‘expiatory’ nature of the Eucharist – a concept in tune with the teaching of the Church of her times. If there is love, sacrifice will not be counted, for it is done for Jesus’ sake. Suffering by itself is not redemptive, but the love with which we accept our suffering. For it is the loving acceptance of the Father’s will that became redemptive in the suffering of the Christ. The unavoidable suffering lovingly endured in union with Jesus will bring about salvation for oneself and the others. On the other hand, if we are embittered with suffering, if we spiritualize our suffering (God wants me to suffer), we shall be wallowing in self-pity. The mystery of Cross is the matrix of our life.

*“True love is revealed in suffering... During my most serious illness..., I gaze upon Jesus on the cross, on Mary motionless at His feet... When my body writhes in pain I must repeat, ‘Thank you Jesus. How glad am I to suffer for you. Make me worthy to suffer and to rejoice in my sufferings’... To suffer quietly without looking for sympathy from my dear ones, to hide from others my own aches and pain as if they did not exist, this is what Jesus wants of me. **Will there be any pain that is unwelcome, if we cling to the crucifix?**”*¹⁷

Our daily pilgrimage must be a Eucharist, that is, “thanksgiving”, a continuity of praise, celebrated in everything that we are. We must experience in our sufferings and contradictions our call to conformity with the Sacrifice of Christ. Our mindset has to be attuned to the mind of Christ: **Victim, Immolation, Sacrifice** -a free and continuous association with His redemptive suffering. The spirit of the Eucharist means to oppose completely the spirit of pride and selfishness which, if left unchecked, gradually narrows our vision so that we hardly think of anyone but ourselves. Dying daily for others means working at being kind and patient; it means fidelity to our work amid negative feelings such as discouragement, laziness, boredom and disinterest. Breaking of bread, therefore, reveals an inner certitude that impels us to overcome difficult interior and exterior relationships.

“Those who cannot do voluntary penance can substitute it with calm resignation and joyful acceptance of their infirmity, pain, adversity, tribulation, desolation of the spirit, in a word all that is repellent to our weak nature, as coming from the hand of God. The serene acceptance of trials and suffering is much more meritorious as there is no possibility of deriving any satisfaction that we occasionally feel when we gratify our own will. Nor is there any danger of self-glorification considering ourselves as

¹⁵ 18.06.1881: Let. to the Students, Let. 21 Fasc. 1

¹⁶ 31.03.1897: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXXI, p.18

¹⁷ 1890: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXIX, p.19

*extraordinary persons far advanced in the way of perfection... The sickbed is an altar on which one offers continuous sacrifice to God...*¹⁸

Reflection:-

- ♥ Am I really earnest in immolating myself with Jesus day after day, so that others may have life?
- ♥ Do I willingly/ gladly “break” my ego so that I may become a fragrant sacrifice? (2Cor. 2:15/ Bull of Can4)
- ♥ Christ the high priest constantly makes intercession for the sinners in the Eucharist (Heb 7:25). Do I intercede for:-
 - Those rulers/ employers who trample on the human and civil rights of others, especially the voiceless?
 - The women who abort/kill/abandon their babes for various reasons?
 - The youth who are in mad pursuit of pleasure?
 - The criminals/ terrorists/ anti-Christians who carry out heinous crimes?
 - The unemployed/handicapped/drug addicts/ AIDS victims et al?

1.2: The efficacy of the Mass

*“The Eucharist is the compendium of our faith, for it contains Jesus its author and victim. There is the incarnation, passion, death, resurrection and glorification of Jesus in it. In other words, it comprises of all that He is and all that He did for our redemption. The Eucharist is the basis of our hope because through his self-gifting in the Eucharist, **Jesus gifts us His grace, applies His merits to us and clothes us in His virtues** by means of which we are able to attain eternal life.”¹⁹*

While adoration and thanksgiving are effects of the Mass which relate to God alone, the success of impetration and expiation on the other hand reverts to man. God is in a truly infinite degree honoured, glorified, and praised in the Eucharistic Sacrifice: through Our Lord Jesus Christ he is thanked by men for all his benefits in an infinite manner, in a manner worthy of God. In the Eucharist God gives us a participation of His own Divine life and pours down copious flood of grace upon our souls.

In view of the infinite worth of Christ as the Victim and High Priest in one Person, the sacrifice is regarded as of infinite value, just as the sacrifice of the Last Supper and that of the Cross. Christ sets into circulation among mankind the redemptory merits definitively and perfectly obtained in the Sacrifice of the Cross. **In what manner does the Eucharistic Sacrifice accomplish its effects and fruits?**

An effect "from the work of the action" (*ex opera operato*) signifies an interior grace produced by a sacrament, in which the proper disposition of the subject comes into account only as an indispensable antecedent condition. For example, baptism by its mere ministration produces *ex opera operato* grace in each recipient of the sacrament who in his heart opposes no obstacle to the reception of the graces of baptism. On the other hand, all

¹⁸*Practical Guide*, Ch. XVI, Fasc. XXV

¹⁹1896-97: *Memoirs*, Fasc. LXVIII, p. 4-5

supernatural effects, which, presupposing the state of grace are accomplished by the personal actions and exertions of the subject, are called effects "from the work of the agent" (*ex opera operantis*).

A **special fruit of the Mass** is conferred *ex opera operato* on the participators in the Sacrifice of the Mass - the community, the celebrant and the persons for whom the Mass is specially applied - the bestowal of which lies immediately in the will of Christ and His Church. However, the effect resulting from the sacrificial activity is entirely dependent on the worthiness and piety of those taking part therein and thus results exclusively *ex opera operantis*. The **extrinsic value of the Mass** is finite in consequence of the limitations of man.

“The faithful participate more fully in this sacrament of thanksgiving, propitiation, petition and praise, not only when they whole-heartedly offer the sacred victim, and in it themselves, to the Father with the priest, but also when they receive this same victim sacramentally.” (EM.5)

The effectiveness of each Mass, which makes the sacrifice of Calvary sacramentally present, depends in part on the holiness of the entire Church offering it with Christ to the Father, including the holiness of individual priest offering the Mass and the holiness of his participating congregation. Since the blood of Christ cries through us to the Father from the altars of the Church, it follows that the purer the lips, the warmer the heart, the more clearly it will be heard at the throne of God. Therefore, **“fruits of the Mass”** derived will naturally **depend very much on the personal efforts and worthiness, the devotion and fervour of those who celebrate or are present at Mass**. The more fervent the prayer, the richer the fruit. Faith is essential to make the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist personal, a one-to-one-presence. Presence presupposes reciprocal communication, an exchange between two persons who are open to each other. Merely being present at the Eucharistic Service will not make Christ present to us; we have to be oriented to Christ present in the Sacred Species and in the tabernacle in our attitude of interior reverence, worship and love.

In order to foster intimate relationship with Jesus, **St. Francis admonished the friars** to *“offer the true Sacrifice of the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ with purity and reverence, with a holy and unblemished intention...”*²⁰ He exhorted them to remember their priestly dignity and the call to holiness associated with it: *“If the Blessed Virgin is so honoured, as is becoming, because she carried Him in her most holy womb... how holy, just and fitting must be he who touches with his hands, receives in his heart and mouth, and offers to others to be received the One... upon Whom the angels longed to gaze.”*²¹ Celano as well as St. Bonaventure gives us a wonderful insight into the depth of the personal devotion of St. Francis for the Eucharist. *“He burned with a love that came from his whole being for the sacrament of the Lord’s Body... He frequently received Communion, and he did so with such devotion that he made others devout.”*²²

Special fruits of the Communion are added to those who receive Holy Communion during the Mass. St. Thomas, in his *Summa Theologica*, says that reception of Holy

²⁰St. Francis: *Letter to the Order*14

²¹St. Francis: *Letter to the Order* 21

²²2 Cel. 201/ LM IX:2

Communion cleanses venial sin from the soul, that temporal punishment due to sin (in purgatory) is remitted, and that the Eucharist strengthens against committing sin in the future. **A worthy reception of Holy Communion** demands that one is free of mortal sin before receiving Christ in Holy Communion, “For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment upon himself”(1 Cor 11: 29). Serious sin kills the life of God, or grace, in the soul and requires sacramental confession before one can receive Holy Communion. Since, no sin whatsoever, grievous or trifling can be forgiven without an act of sorrow, we must confine the efficacy of the Mass, even in the case of venial sins, to obtaining the grace of contrition for less serious sins. Without the personal cooperation and sorrow of the sinner, all forgiveness of sin by God is impossible.

The believer who approaches Holy Communion must try as far as possible to be purified in soul and receive forgiveness of sins by the power of Sacramental Confession. They should not only have the humility of the centurion in the Gospel: “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof” (Mt. 8:8), but also the enraptured gaze of Mary as she cradled her newborn Son in her arms and contemplated him as the Son of God.²³

*“If you strive to keep yourself so pure as to be granted the grace to partake of this heavenly banquet often, **Jesus will make Himself known to you in proportion to your longing for Him.** The more you yearn for Him, the more mist will be lifted, enabling you to discover Him fully”.*²⁴

Jesus gave us the example of a life lived for others – a life become “bread broken for the world”. When we make efforts to interiorize the Mysteries we celebrate, and open ourselves to their action, God’s light will gradually penetrate and mould our thoughts, feelings, will and all our inner being, enabling us to put aside our own plans to make way for His. As we assimilate the divine life through contemplation of the Mysteries, our practical actions will take on Christ-like nature.

Reflection:-

- ♥ When the disciples at Emmaus recognized the Lord in the breaking of the bread, they – though tired after the long journey, hastened to Jerusalem late at night to tell the other disciples.
 - **Do I really encounter the Lord in the Eucharist?**
 - **Am I an apostle of the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist?**

1.3: The Right Disposition to attend the Eucharistic Service

*“When the religious participates in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, **she should imagine herself to be on Mount Calvary** in the company of the Most Blessed Virgin and of Mary Magdalene and contemplate the scene of a God dying for humankind. She should speak to him whatever she might tell him if she could see Jesus with her own eyes. Even though the main part of the sacrifice lies in the consecration during which Jesus dies mystically in the separation of his body and blood, offering himself as the*

²³ Cf. EE 55

²⁴21.04.1896/ 16.03.1901: *Rules and Regulation for the Novitiate*, Ch. II Fasc. XXIV

propitiatory victim, yet it is good to follow every part of the Mass right from the very moment when the priest approaches the altar, because every ritual, every act comprises a Mystery, a sentiment, a prayer..... Let us implore Jesus to teach us the wonders of the Divine sacrifice, to grant us the grace to assist at it with the contrition of Mary Magdalene, the purity of St. John and always with the love of the Blessed Virgin Mary. ²⁵

For Seraphina the key models for loving contemplation of the Eucharistic Lord are the Most Blessed Virgin and Mary Magdalene. ***“The contrition of Mary Magdalene, the purity of St. John and the love of the Blessed Virgin Mary” are the key ingredients for participating in the Eucharist.*** Mary’s anguished gaze at her crucified Son as she stood beneath the cross should be our sentiment when we adore the Eucharistic Jesus – whether in the Sacrament of the Altar or while gazing at the consecrated Host. Next we have to emulate Mary Magdalene whose ardent love for Jesus had made her follow him to the foot of the cross when all his apostles had abandoned him, and whose intense longing to find His body long after her companions had left the sepulcher was rewarded by the Risen Lord. Seraphina wished that every sister should be solicitous like Magdalene to renew her mind and heart by preparing a fertile ground for the word of God she would be receiving as she sits at the Master’s feet. Hence, Seraphina exhorts the sisters:

*“One has to keep Magdalene in view when she approaches the Mysteries as well as in one’s meditation, adoration and visit to the Blessed Sacrament. One listens with her to the words of Jesus that converts, transforms and initiates that life which brings her to intimate union with Him. O Blessed Magdalene grant us also the inestimable grace to listen to and receive the words of Jesus”.*²⁶

In her writings there is a confusion of the Gospel personages: Mary Magdalene out of whom seven devils were cast out (Mk. 16:9/ Lk 8:2), with Mary of Bethany and the unnamed penitent woman who anointed Jesus’ feet (Lk 7:36-48), since these three women were considered by the Latin Church to be one and the same woman.²⁷ Certainly, Seraphina wants every sister to imitate the love and devotion of Mary Magdalene towards the Eucharistic Jesus: Magdalene, the model of the “redeemed one” par excellence, the faithful disciple of Jesus who received the honour of becoming the “apostle of apostles” announcing to them the joy of Resurrection.

“The Church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ’s faithful should not be there as strangers or silent spectators. On the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers they should take part in the sacred action, conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full collaboration. Offering the immaculate victim, not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him **they should learn to offer themselves.** Through Christ, the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into ever perfect union with God and each other, so that finally God may be all in all.” (cf. SC:48)

²⁵ *Practical Guide*, Ch. IV

²⁶ 01.08.1897: *Memoirs, Pius Acts for the Novena for St. Clare and Assumption*, Fasc. XXIX, p. 35

²⁷ The Greek Fathers, however, distinguished the three women, while the Protestant critics believe that there were two, if not three, distinct persons.

Mystics like St. Francis, St. Clare and Julian of Norwich were able to not only experience the peace and power of the Eucharistic Lord in loving contemplation but also feel and taste the sweetness of the Bread from heaven. *“O sublime humility! O humble sublimity! That the Lord of the universe, God and Son of God, so humbles Himself that for our salvation He hides Himself under the little form of bread! Look brothers, at the humility of God! And pour out your hearts before Him; humble yourselves as well, that you may be exalted by Him. Therefore, hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves, so that He who gives Himself totally to you may receive you totally!”*²⁸

“One priority condition to the following of Christ, therefore, is abnegation, detachment from all that is not him. The Lord wants men and women who are free, not bound, able to give up everything to follow him and to find in him alone their very all. To belong to Christ means to keep the flame of love always burning in our heart, continually fed by the richness of faith, not only when this brings with it interior joy but also when it is joined to difficulty, aridity and suffering. Prayer is the nourishment for the interior life, intimate conversation of the consecrated soul with the divine Spouse. Even richer nourishment is daily participation in the ineffable mystery of the divine Eucharist.”²⁹

Reflection:-

- ♥ How do I approach the Eucharistic Service daily?
- ♥ Do I take the Eucharist for granted, making it a casual, routine ritual?
- ♥ Is my spirituality mere ritualism? Does it foster intimate union with the Eucharistic Lord?

1.4: The Eucharist: the Fount of Mother Seraphina’s Life and Spirituality

*“Oh, would that I knew what paradise Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is! Oh that I could remember all the outrages committed against Jesus! The negligence in paying him frequent visits! Would that I felt the apathy towards such a precious treasure! How I wish that everyone were penetrated by so great a truth namely, that **the Blessed Sacrament is the be-all and end-all for a religious**”.*³⁰

According to her personal *“Form of Life”* the pivot of Seraphina’s life and activity was Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. She drew from the Eucharist nourishment for her soul and the strength and power to carry out her arduous mission. Her first thought on waking was Jesus present in the tabernacle; her first act of the day was **to offer herself as a victim in union with the sacrificial Lamb on the altar**; her day was a continuous act of reparation and immolation with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

*“Rise at day break with a whisper of love to Jesus. Then make the sign of the cross with the yearning to immolate myself to the Trinity in union with the Divine Victim being offered in the Eucharist at that selfsame moment. To be united to the great sacrifice!...”*³¹

Afire with passionate love of Jesus, Seraphina **yearned to immolate herself** to the Trinity in union with the Divine Victim being offered in the Eucharist:

²⁸ St. Francis: *Letter to the Entire Order*, 27-29

²⁹22.5.2006, Pope Benedict XVI: address to Superiors General of Religious Institutes

³⁰ 27.03.1881: Mother Seraphina’ let. 16, Fasc. I

³¹*Method of Life*: Christmas 1888, Fasc. 29

*“I wish to dedicate and consecrate to Jesus alone all that I have and all the rest of my days. I offer myself to Him as fragrant incense, as a victim of earnest atonement, generous sacrifice and ardent love, directing everything wholly for the glory of God and for the salvation of the souls. I am glad to immolate myself so that everyone could be led to the adorable Heart of Jesus... All my promises, resolutions, methods etc., written in January 1881, are summed up in these few words.”*³²

115 years later, we have Pope Paul II underscoring the urgency of each participant offering him/herself along with the sacrificial Lamb to the Father during the Eucharist: *“In giving his sacrifice to the Church, Christ has also made his own the spiritual sacrifice of the Church, which is called to offer herself in union with the sacrifice of Christ. This is the teaching of the Second Vatican Council concerning all the faithful: ‘Taking part in Eucharistic sacrifice, which is the source and summit of the whole Christian life, they offer the divine victim to God, and offer themselves along with it.’*³³

1.5: A Soul Athirst to Participate in the Mass

*“St. Paul says that Jesus Christ has recapitulated in himself all things so that united with Jesus, we miserable creatures, are enabled to render glory to God in him and through him, give Him thanks, expiate our sins and beg for favours: all this by means of the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Hence let us meditate on this sacrifice of infinite value. Let us also consider the ritual that precedes and follows it, for every action has a profound meaning³⁴: the very vestments have a symbolic meaning relating to the life, passion and death of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us offer the Holy Mass as preparation and thanksgiving for our Communion, as if we were participating in it for the last time in our life and offering for those very last moments the Divine Victim who praises, gives thanks, expiates, prays and leads us into Paradise.”*³⁵

Seraphina ardently desired to obtain daily the “fruits of the Mass”, participating in it with great devotion, fervour, personal holiness, purity and above all, with the faith and love of the Blessed Virgin and Magdalene at Calvary as they witnessed the harrowing scene of Christ’s death on the cross.

³²Christmas 1888: *Method of Life* Fasc. 29

³³*EE 13*

³⁴ The priests of the Roman Rite wore the amice, alb, cincture, maniple, stole and chasuble in the celebration of the Mass up to the time of Vatican Council II. Symbolic significance was attached to the different vestments by the Church as shown by the prayers said by the priest as he put on each piece of attire. The amice stood for the ‘helmet of salvation’ which helped the priest to overcome the assaults of the devil. The alb which enveloped the priest’s whole body urged him to purify himself from all stain and cleanse his heart. The cincture or the cord that fastened the alb at the waist stimulated the priest to gird himself with the girdle of purity and to quench the fire of concupiscence so that the virtue of continence and chastity may remain in him. The maniple which hung from the left arm symbolized the tears and sorrows he had to bear, while the stole denoted his priestly powers. Lastly, the chasuble - the uppermost vestment, stood for the burden of his duty he had to carry day after day.

³⁵*Practical Guide*, Ch.IV

“Oh, who can grasp even a shadow of the preciousness of this ineffable Mystery? Foolish is the person who does not value so great a treasure!”³⁶

“I’ll attend as many Masses as possible, because Jesus has clearly made me understand and taste the excellence of such a Sacrifice. He has taught me the manner of participating in it and to gain the best of it...The angels utterly humbles themselves before the victim offered: “Through Him, with Him, in Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour be yours Almighty Father.” (Thursday, 2 December 1886) I didn’t know earlier this sublime point of the Mass.³⁷

Seraphina not only was consumed by a burning desire to participate daily in the Holy Mass, but also to immolate herself to God in union with Christ and to offer prayers of petition for her sisters, students, for the conversion of sinners and the Non-Christians, the souls in Purgatory, those in the grip of freemasonry and the rising political and social ideologies that undermined the Catholic faith in the 19th century, et al.

“One should participate in the Holy Mass, the sacrifice par excellence, every day except for reasons of health or assistance to the sick, because from no other act of worship do we draw so much grace as from it. What had not the early Christians undergone in order to attend the Mass? They even risked martyrdom.”³⁸

Reflection:-

- ♥ Do I experience an inner longing to participate in the Eucharistic celebration?
- ♥ What is my response to the opportunities for Holy Mass available in our own convent?
- ♥ *“After he took the morsel, Satan entered him.... And it was night.” (Jn 13:27, 30)*
 - Is of the state of my soul after participating in the daily Holy Mass?

2: Holy Communion: Sacrificial Banquet

*“Holy Communion is the life of our hearts, the heart of our lives. What will this earth be without Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament? Just as food nourishes our body, the only true nourishment for our soul is the Eucharist. Whoever partakes of this heavenly meal with due disposition, will **draw from it the strength to overcome her passions, the grace to grow in virtues and to detach herself from earthly affairs, so that she could be united with Jesus**, the most endearing Lover who knocks at our hearts to enter and make His dwelling place therein. Oh, how blessed would we be, if the promise of the Saviour is fulfilled in us: “Whoever loves me will keep my word and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him” (Jn. 15:23)! Undoubtedly, it can be effected through Holy Communion, which transforms the earthly person into a spiritual being, as St. Augustine attests in the tenth chapter of the seventh book of his ‘Confession’... Oh, the grandeur of God’s love for His creatures! Who can resist His exquisiteness! **Like a thirsty deer, let us run to this wholesome***

³⁶Practical Guide, Ch. IV

³⁷Christmas 1888: Method of Life Fasc. 29

³⁸Practical Guide, Ch. IV

spring...Let us pray to the Virgin, our Seraphic Father, the Guardian Angel, our protectors and all the saints in heaven to cover our unworthiness with their merits. Let us beg all the fervent persons on this earth to make us sharers in their preparation and ardent thanksgiving."³⁹

Communion with the Divine has been the goal of every human being right from time immemorial. For God has placed in human hearts a yearning for communion with Him: a "hunger" which God alone can satisfy. He desires to be fully united with us – to become one with us – so that all of God and all of us can be bound together in a lasting love.

In the consciousness of the primitive man, he could partake of divine strength and enter into communion with gods by his participation in the sacrificial gifts. In the ancient Hebrew mentality, sacrifice was not so much giving up their best lamb or the first and best part of their harvest: sacrifice meant communion of life. If an animal was sacrificed to God, the people did not think that the animal was killed to appease an angry God. Instead, they thought of blood as the presence of life.

When we love someone we want a concrete relationship. Love wants to be near the one it loves, to be united with the one it loves. The loving Spirit of God always seeks a real relationship with us: a concrete body-and-blood relationship. The mystery of God's love is that He invented a way of showing His love for us not only by being with us and near us but God even invented a way of being inside of us. For in the Sacred Species the totality of Christ is present: His flesh and blood, body and soul, humanity and divinity.

*"Oh, what happiness! The angels are not worthy of it! I've God in my heart! Yes, I possess Him. He is in me! He's with me! His heart and mine are but a single heart."*⁴⁰

To receive the Eucharist is to receive Christ, the Bridegroom, who, besides giving Himself, also gives, through the sacrament of His Body and Blood, the full power of His grace. "**Just one communion well received will take us into the very embrace of God,**" writes Seraphina in the *Practical Guide*. According to her the **most emotion-charged moment of the Eucharist is the time of Holy Communion** when "*Jesus takes complete possession of our heart and mind*". He mingles his Body and Blood with our own body and blood, christifying us, making us divine. In the Eucharist, we become what we receive; we become Christ. St. Augustine says, unlike other food which nourishes one by becoming physically part of the person who eats, **the Eucharist changes those who receive it into Christ**: they become a part of this heavenly food, the Body of Christ. "*If you have received the Body and Blood of Christ properly, you yourselves are what you have received. Consequently, not only have we become Christians, we have become Christ himself.*" To quote Pope Benedict XVI, "it is not the Eucharistic food that is changed into us, but rather we who are mysteriously transformed by it."⁴¹

*"I believe, I hope, I love! Unforgettable Holy Communion! Jesus takes complete possession of our heart and mind! The soul embraced by Jesus belongs to God alone."*⁴²

³⁹21.04.1896/ 16.03.1901: *Rules and Regulation for the Novitiate*, Ch. II Fasc. XXIV

⁴⁰ 1896-97: *Secret of my Sanctification*

⁴¹ Cf. *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 70

⁴²02.04.1898: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXXI, p. 31

In receiving the sacramental Body of Christ, one becomes more and more the mystical Body of Christ, the Church. The Eucharist aims at making us gods through partaking His Body and Blood.

*“Communion! What is Communion? In Communion we are united to Jesus Christ; we receive Him as the Victim and **become the victim along with Him...Communion is the extension of Incarnation....**”⁴³*

For Mother Seraphina **to receive Jesus means to be received by Him** at the same time, in a wonderful exchange by which one reciprocally lives, “This is my body given for you...my blood poured out for you”(Lk. 22:19). One who receives the Eucharist is enabled to be the “Eucharist for God” in her turn, that is, giving thanks in “praise and action.”In her unquenchable hunger for the Food of Life, she exclaims,

“My God, how could I spend even a single day without receiving Thee? You are my all, my portion, my heritage!”⁴⁴

Reflection

- ♥ *“Mingling our flesh vivified by the Holy Spirit and the life giving flesh of Christ, we become divine in body and soul.”⁴⁵*
 - Am I convinced of this fact?
- ♥ How earnestly do I prepare my heart during the day for the reception of Jesus in Communion?
- ♥ What are my feelings and thoughts as I approach the Lord in Holy Communion?

2.1: Thirst for the Food of Angels

*“Jesus who gives Himself to us in Holy Communion! Oh if we had true faith in that fortunate moment, **we could see Jesus with the mind’s eye just as the saints in Paradise see Him!** Do you wish to see Him? Be very humble. True humility will lead you to faith and faith will enable you to have the vision of Jesus, living and true as He is in heaven. Oh unending joy! No, no, my sufferings are not worth mentioning at all, for I yearn for Him with every fibre of my heart.”⁴⁶*

Long before Pope Pius X had popularized the daily reception of the Eucharist, Seraphina had cultivated in her pupils and sisters an ardent desire to receive Jesus every morning and to talk to Him as if He were seen with their own eyes and to spend the whole day as an act of thanksgiving.

“Oh that the Incarnate Word made you taste a drop of that charism He bestowed on the Virgin when he took flesh in her! Would that on the blessed night each one of you received a flash of that faith which Mary and Joseph had when they adored the new-

⁴³ Memoirs, Fasc. LXVIII, p. 45

⁴⁴ *Practical Life*, Ch. IV

⁴⁵ Chiara Lubich: *La Dottrina Spirituale*, 2002 p. 173

⁴⁶ 21.06.1898: Let. to Sr. Veronica, Let. 283, Fasc. VI – VII

born Baby! If we were to receive this gift, then our Communion will be quite different from what they were in the past. Then shall we taste the real presence of Jesus in us."⁴⁷

Her overwhelming feeling of absolute emptiness when the authorities curtailed the possibility of daily reception of the Eucharist is borne by her anguished cry:

*"My sorrow is incomparable to anything I have undergone in the past... I received Communion only 18 times the whole of May! What emptiness without Jesus! How to live without Life?"*⁴⁸

The ever solicitous mother for the spiritual welfare of her daughters, Seraphina wrote to Pope Pius X requesting His Holiness to dispense the seriously ailing Sr. Maria Clara from observing the Eucharistic fast so that she could receive Jesus every morning during her final days.⁴⁹ And in 1913, Seraphina encourages the sisters at Ravenna to have daily Communion:

*"This morning I wrote to the Vatican to grant us the grace to receive Holy Communion every day. I am sure of getting the permission. Hence, as you get this letter, you can begin the reception of the Sacrament daily."*⁵⁰

Seraphina underscores the importance of the **Sacramental Communion** and speaks of Spiritual communion only in the context of sickness, or as preparation for the sacramental one, revealing thus her ardent passion for the sacramental meeting with the Eucharistic Jesus to the point of intense suffering, when deprived of it.

*"Communion often during the day, if it were dependent on me: "You are in need of receiving Him every day of your life." St. Teresa would have crossed an array of soldiers to receive Communion (March 1885). If I'm sick, I'll express my ardent desire, and if it is not gratified, I'll lovingly offer my bitter sacrifice to Jesus and compensate it with spiritual communion."*⁵¹

In an age where daily communion was not permitted⁵², Seraphina not only yearned to receive Jesus everyday but also inculcated in the candidates and boarders an ardent longing for frequent reception of the Eucharist. Writing to one of her ex-pupils in 1881, she asks:

*"How long is it that you have not received Holy Communion? For pretty long? How can you be so laid-back? O how I long – though I feel quite unworthy – to receive Jesus more often in a day! Lucia, my dear Lucia, begin right now to love the good God who alone is worthy to be loved."*⁵³

In the initial stages, the community at Palagano had to endure a lot of privations and hardships. But to Seraphina those deprivations were like water off the duck's back; what

⁴⁷ 16.11.1902: Cir. Let. 12

⁴⁸ 02.05.1891: Memoirs, Fasc. XXX, p. 12

⁴⁹ 02.11.1907: Let. to Pope Pius X, Let. 23 Fasc. XLIV

⁵⁰ 19.04.1913: Let. to Sr. Geltrude, Let. 1240, Fasc. XL

⁵¹ Christmas 1888: *Method of Life*

⁵² The religious had to wait for the decree *Tridentina Synodus* of December 20, 1905, wherein Pope Pius X advised daily Holy Communion

⁵³ 17.03.1881: Let. to Lucia, Let. 3 Fasc. I

cost her the most was the absence of Jesus in their tabernacle, for the Sacred Host was not reserved in their chapel. *“No place is worth living, if there is no Sacrament.”*⁵⁴ Seraphina was anxious that the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in every convent Chapel, for as she writes, *“A religious house without the Blessed Sacrament is like a corpse.”*⁵⁵

On 5 March 1881 she had requested Archbishop G. M. Guidelli of Modena to grant the community of Palagano *“the incomparable privilege of having the Blessed Sacrament”* reserved in its private chapel: *“the paradise on earth for the religious, without which she feels lifeless.”*

Reflection:-

- ♥ Do I feel a sense of emptiness, when I’m deprived of the opportunity to receive Communion?
- ♥ Am I conscious of the living presence of Jesus in our chapel?
- ♥ *“How is it, my daughters, that after so many Holy Communions we are ever the same today as we were yesterday? **Can one bask in the sunshine without feeling its warmth, or seeing its light?**”*⁵⁶
 - What do I do to not merit this reproof of Mother Seraphina?

2. 2: Proximate/Remote preparation for reception of the Body and Blood of Jesus

*“Oh sublimity! Who can comprehend it? Let us then penetrate, as far as possible, into this mystery of Love, with a remote preparation, remembering throughout the day that we have received Jesus. **Such a remembrance will curb impatience, subdue passions, sweeten pain, germinate virtues, receive faith and inflame charity**...Yes, all through the day, let us remember that we carry the Sacred Mysteries within us. Such a thought will give us the strength to overcome all evil inclinations and to practice virtue to a heroic degree, provided it is accompanied by acts of love so well expressed in ejaculatory prayers which are like darts that fly from our hearts, pierce the Heart of Jesus, and return to us tempered anew in the furnace of Divine Love.”*⁵⁷

It is necessary that we earnestly prepare ourselves in order to gain the sacramental grace. Seraphina urges her daughters to prepare themselves for the reception of the Sacrament with remote and proximal preparation: *“**Half the day is to be spent in thanksgiving and the other half in preparation for the next Communion, ...stirring up our love with spontaneous acts of faith, hope and love.**”* Throughout the day one is expected to make for the Celestial Lover a garland of one’s daily routine activities. In fact, one must live the whole day for the purpose of meeting with the Spouse – Eucharistic Jesus, always remaining interiorly united to Him, and enhancing the awareness of his real presence in the Most Holy Sacrament either already received or about to receive.

⁵⁴ 19.07.1896: Let. To Sisters Bernardina & Germana, Let. 211 Fasc. V, p.31

⁵⁵ 18.01.1892: Let. To Bp. Svampa, Let. 19 Fasc. LVIII, p. 24

⁵⁶ Practical Guide Ch. IV

⁵⁷ Practical Guide, Ch. IV

*“Here at Bagno, I’ve quite intuitively grasped that the prayers in the morning, the immediate preparation for Holy Communion, vitalize the rest of the day. Thanksgiving from midday to midnight, or better still from communion to midday. Preparation, that is to say, **with** whatever good one does, from midday to Communion. And who on earth is that person who doesn’t constantly long for Jesus?”⁵⁸*

Reflection

- ♥ During the day am I aware of Jesus dwelling in me? In others?
- ♥ Do I make a conscious effort to drive away all the negative thoughts that cloud my vision/ block the flow of grace into me and into others?

2.3: Post-Communion: The most opportune moment to Petition God (impetratio)

*“Let us continue our thanksgiving in the company of the Blessed Virgin and of Mary Magdalene who in her ecstatic contemplation sees Jesus in herself and herself in Jesus. The heart of such a soul is in paradise though she lives upon this earth....What beautiful **moments are those that follow Communion!** Woe to the one who wastes even a single second...But if you let your mind wander the moment he enters your heart, or ignore him completely forgetting that he is within you, how can he reveal himself to you?”⁵⁹*

The Eucharist is the most effective channel for the graces that we and others need in our pilgrimage through life: graces necessary to know what pleases God, to choose what He wants us to do, and to sustain our choice by loving Him above all things. In both ways, as a means of propitiation and petition, the Mass confers the graces needed from God's mercy to expiate the sins of the past and the graces needed from God's bounty to obtain His blessings for the future.

One should not “**fritter away the precious moments of Holy Communion**” in worthless distractions. For it is the best of time for communing with the divine Bridegroom: Seraphina is fully convinced that “the moments that follow Holy Communion are infinitely precious, as it is then that Jesus is particularly pleased to teach us.

*“Jesus within us! O what Paradise! An **eternity of thanksgiving is required for a single communion...** In Holy Communion, Jesus enriches us with His virtues and merits and bestows all graces on us. But, why don’t we receive them?...Oh, the answer is clear...It is because we do not thank Him, or love Him with His own heartbeat ... Oh my daughters, may your **proximate preparation be great faith, sincere humility and ardent love.** Then you will be able to enjoy the desired effects.”⁶⁰*

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ Practical Guide Ch IV

⁶⁰ 08.06.1898: Cir. Let. 4

According to Seraphina **the most opportune time to ask for favours is post-Communion**, when Jesus will not turn a deaf ear to any of our petitions. For Jesus the High-Priest interceding for his brothers and sisters (Heb 7:25) is seated in our hearts, “*and we can get whatever we wish for ourselves and others.*” Seraphina wished to storm heaven to bestow the “general fruit” of the Eucharistic Sacrifice on all mankind, thus effecting the conversion of not only the hardcore sinners but also of the excommunicated, heretics and infidels. She gives us a long list of persons to pray for: from the Pope - to the missionaries - to the world at large.

*“I am convinced that **whatever we ask Jesus in Holy Communion will be granted to us.** With our hearts on fire with love, like our Seraphic father in the Portiuncula chapel, let us ask Jesus for the conversion of sinners, heretics and non-Christians. Let us speak to him about our Holy Mother Church, the Supreme Pontiff, the Catholic episcopacy, our Order, our work, our convents, our Bishop, the priests, our souls, the missions, the missionaries, the daughters entrusted to our care, the abandoned, our family and the world at large. Let us pray for the departed souls, for all those who groan for him.”*⁶¹

More than a century later, we have Pope Francis stamping his seal on the power of intercessory prayers: “**Intercession** is like a ‘leaven’ in the heart of the Trinity. It is a way of penetrating the Father’s heart and discovering new dimensions which can shed light on concrete situations and change them... **God’s heart is touched by our intercession**... What our intercession achieves is that His power, His love and His faithfulness are shown ever more clearly in the midst of the people.”⁶²

Reflection

- ♥ “Each day of our journey is marked by God’s presence. He guides our steps with the power of the grace that the Spirit pours into our hearts to make them capable of loving.”(Pope Francis: Mm 21)
 - What is my attitude towards the prayer of intercession?
 - How sensitive am I to the needs of the people around me? Do I intercede to the Lord for them, especially for the neediest?
- ♥ How often do I offer a reassuring word/ a prayer/ gestures of tenderness to the lonely and the suffering to make them feel understood/ loved/ stronger?

2.4: Spiritual Communion

*“An efficacious means to remember that we have received the Mysteries is Spiritual Communion which consists in a vibrant desire to welcome the Eucharistic Jesus into your Heart and to speak to Him as if you have really received Him. Whoever has tasted this heavenly food, however satiated she might be, will always yearn to relish it. Oh what marvel! Satiety that begets appetite!”*⁶³

⁶¹Practical Guide, Ch IV

⁶²Evangelii Gaudium, 283

⁶³21.04.1896/ 16.03.1901: Rules and Regulation for the Novitiate, Ch. II

Fasc. XXIV

Seraphina exhorted her sisters to make frequent Spiritual Communion, especially on those days when they are unable to receive it sacramentally,⁶⁴ and to cultivate an ardent desire for the Eucharist.

2. 5: The Transforming Power of the Eucharist

*“Absolutely tangible was the transformation of the body and blood of Jesus in me... a feeling that I’ve never before experienced ... Oh what a lovely experience! **What a heavenly rapture!** ... My heart nearly burst out of my chest. O Jesus, broaden my mind so that I may understand you, enlarge my heart so that I may love you ever more!”¹²*

“Power went out from him” (Mk 5:30). In the Eucharist, Jesus shares his transforming power with us. Paul’s mystic **encounter with Christ** on the way to Damascus transformed him from within and gave a new direction to his life. The energies it generated drove him to the ends of the earth, labouring tirelessly for the growth of the Christian community. From that stunning experience onwards, he became a ‘man in Christ’; he felt that it was Christ who was working in him: “I live, now not I; but Christ lives in me” (Gal 2:20).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1391-3) speaks of Communion as deepening the “intimate union with Christ Jesus.” As he, himself, said “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him” (Jn 6:56). Those who nourish themselves on the life-giving Body and Blood of Jesus, acquire a consciousness of being rooted in Christ. His presence in the Sacred Species entails that all who take part in the Eucharist be devoted **to change their lives by a transfigured existence** and a commitment to transforming the world in accordance with the Gospel.⁶⁵ To have humanity transformed by his love, each participant in the Eucharist must commit him/herself to be conformed to Christ: to become a witness of his love through one’s actions, words and ways of being. *“Our communities must become ever more conscious that the sacrifice of Christ is for all, and that the Eucharist thus compels all who believe in him to become **“bread that is broken” for others, and to work for the building of a more just and fraternal world...Each Christian is called to be bread broken for the life of the world.**”⁶⁶*

A true encounter with the Eucharistic Lord is **transformative**, as in the case of Mary Magdalene and Zacchaeus, both of whom began to live a completely changed life after personally meeting Jesus. In the Eucharistic Bread we are transformed into His life as Jesus dwells in our inmost being; He breathes in us, speaks in us and lives in us. *“The moral urgency born of welcoming Jesus into our lives is the fruit of gratitude for having experienced the Lord’s unmerited closeness.”⁶⁷* As the bread and wine are transformed into

⁶⁴ The religious had to wait for the decree *Tridentina Synodus* of December 20, 1905, wherein Pope Pius X advised daily Holy Communion.

¹²02.04.1897: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXXI, p. 19

⁶⁵ Cf. EE 20

⁶⁶*Sacramentum Caritatis*, 88

⁶⁷*Sacramentum Caritatis*, 82

the Body and Blood of Jesus, into the very person of Jesus, so are we who receive him in the Eucharist transformed and made Christ-like, if we but believe! **Seraphina wants every sister to live this transforming power of the Eucharist.**

But this transformation cannot take place, if one is filled with the worship of her ego – her ambitions, ideas, superiority complex, or self-sufficiency, so full of her own self - that there is no room for the Eucharistic Presence, or the Spirit of the Lord to move in her innermost being. The more we allow the Spirit to cleanse our hearts to receive the words of Jesus and put them into practice, the more room will be there for the Eucharistic Lord. The more we let him abide in us, and try to live his values and love like him, the more we will resemble him in our day-to-day life. Each CFMSS should be thrilled by the idea that ***“the soul embraced by Jesus belongs to God alone.”***

*“It isn’t enough to mortify our senses; we **have to search our interior to find if and how we are dead to self-love and pride.** Let us cling to the Crucifix daily for five minutes, beseeching the Lord to reveal to us our predominant fault and to uproot it by acts contrary to it... It is essential to possess true love: the pure love that produces deeds and not words.”* ⁶⁸

During the epiclesis while the priest prays to the Father to make holy the gifts by the Spirit so that they become the Body and Blood of Christ, each sister is to beg the Spirit to **change her into a new person – a renewed Eucharistic woman**, “bread that is broken” for others. This is the very paradigm of Eucharistic Life that Mother Seraphina wished to live.

Each CFMSS is to be **open to the powerful metanoia that Jesus works in the soul** by His Eucharistic presence, in the measure that she is attentive to his Spirit and has deep faith in Jesus. According to Seraphina each sister is to have a personal experience of what Magdalene, the prodigal son, John and the Virgin Mother had experienced: like the penitent a true contrition for one’s sins, being cleansed and purified of all her stains, like the spendthrift son being welcomed back to the bosom of his love, like the beloved disciple being so close to Him as to listen to His words, above all, like the Virgin Mother being lost in the loving contemplation of his face. Afire with consuming love for the Eucharist, Seraphina poses the poignant question:

*“How is it, my daughters, that after so many Holy Communions **we are ever the same today as we were yesterday?** Because we do not comprehend the immense gift of the Eucharist, and we do not grasp its grandeur since we do not meditate on it, engrossed as we are in the fleeting things of this world... He is within us and we in him. Don’t we then possess his charity, his meekness et al?”*⁶⁹

Only when one takes pains to keep him/herself in the state of grace, can a person be disposed to experience the transforming power of the Eucharist. “In the Eucharist Jesus makes us witnesses of God’s compassion towards all our sisters and brothers, enabling us, in God and with God, to love even the person we do not like or even know. We learn to look on this other person not simply with our eyes and our feelings, but from the perspective of Christ.”⁷⁰

⁶⁸05.06.1890: *Prayers and Acts of Mortification*, Fasc. XX

⁶⁹8. 6.1898: M. Seraphina, Circular No. 4, Fasc. VI-VII

⁷⁰ Cf. *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 88

Reflection:-

- ♥ How is my life a gift that is being taken, blessed, broken and shared in its totality?
- ♥ How far have I let myself be touched and transformed by the Eucharist?
- ♥ How much do I resemble Jesus in my attitude, thought-pattern and behaviour?
- ♥ Can the people I interact with sense the power and presence of the Eucharistic Jesus in and around me?

Though Mother Seraphina has written a lot even of quite intimate spiritual matter, she has often left only dots regarding her relationship with the Eucharistic Jesus. Evidently her personal experience always remains that “secret of the king” (Tob. 12:7), which only the soul – at times not even the soul – and God really knows. However, the mystical experience that Seraphina had once during a Eucharistic celebration as attested by her Memoirs at least reveals like the tip of an iceberg her inner Eucharistic life.

“I’ll always remember the Mass celebrated by Mgr. Polloni on 30th March 1897... You were ministering through him O Jesus, for it was you who dazzled my mind with a brilliance, flooded me with joy and rained down on me a shower of sweet nectar... Perhaps you wanted me to have a taste of heaven in order to prepare and strengthen my soul against the bitter ordeal in store for me...

During the Mass I felt my heart break into smithereens with contrition, confusion and love. The flame of charity that you poured into the celebrant converted the chapel into Calvary. Even the vaulted ceiling seemed to be wonder-struck at the sight of a God who dies. Clinging to the Cross along with the Virgin Mother, Magdalene and John I persistently invoked a drop of your blood to fall on me, ... to cleanse me from all my sins... and I saw the altar turning red with the precious fluid.

You alone know what I saw in that moment, the vision that enveloped my whole being as by a mysterious veil that screens one off from other creatures and makes her see the Creator... You know as well the grace you worked in me... I could feel myself being bathed in a brilliant light, afire with heavenly charity, flooded with surpassing peace, suffused with fresh joy and filled with the sweetest celestial nectar that fell on me like invisible dew drenching every fibre of my being.⁷¹

3. Eucharist: the Sacrament of Communion

“The bread which we break, is it not a communion in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor 10:16-17)

As St. John Chrysostom says, “*as bread is completely one, though made up of many grains of wheat, and these, albeit unseen, remain nonetheless present in such a way that their difference is not apparent since they have been made a perfect whole, so too are we mutually joined to one another and together joined with Christ*”.⁷² The **Eucharist is a concrete encounter of the community with Jesus**, with God; it emphasizes Christ's

⁷¹31.03.1897: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXXI, p.16 - 18

⁷² EE 23

presence in the people gathered to celebrate the Eucharist. In the incarnate person whom we receive **we are entering into a communion** which (i) issues from the Father who so loves us that he gives his Son to be the atonement of our sins, (ii) from the Son so loving that he gives his life for us and to us, (iii) from the Spirit lovingly making us one in loving life. Thus the Eucharist is the highest expression of the Church's communion with Triune God and among people.

During the Last Supper, Jesus drew his close disciples into an extra-ordinary experience of 'communion'. Similarly, in and through the Eucharist, he draws the whole of human society to himself. In the Eucharist "unlike other sacrament, **the mystery of communion is so perfect** that it brings us to the heights of every good thing: here is the ultimate goal of every human desire, because here we attain God and God joins himself to us in the most perfect union."⁷³ Receiving the Eucharist means entering into a profound communion with Jesus; "Abide in me, and I in you" (Jn 15:4). In the sacramental communion, "we can say not only that each of us receives Christ, but also that **Christ receives each of us**"⁷⁴. He embraces everyone, even the weakest and more ailing members, with the deepest love of his heart. Our Eucharist becomes meaningful only if it integrates us into the Body of Jesus: "I becoming what I receive in communion."

In the language of the Bible the term "body" denotes the whole person in whom body and spirit are invisibly one. Therefore, in Holy Communion we receive a person: the Lord Jesus Christ who gives us His Flesh and Blood to adore, worship and nourish our souls on, so that we might live with His life. He promises eternal life to all "who feed on Him" (Jn 6:57) and offers Himself as our nourishment. The wonderful image of an infant in the mother's womb illustrates this fact. The infant is being nourished through the umbilical cord by the body and blood of the mother. The love expressed in the Eucharist is like the love between a mother and her infant in the womb. "The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh....Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you....Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them" (Jn 6:51-56).

In the early Church the Eucharist was sometimes called '**The Lord's Supper**' because it was understood that Christ the Lord was **the invisible Host who invited the participants to join him around the table**. In the Eucharist Jesus offers himself to God as victim and sacrifice; he offers himself as food for the hungry. His chalice contains the sufferings, struggles, tears and traumas of the people. In the Eucharist Jesus expands himself so that people can have life; he breaks himself so that we can partake of his body. He chooses "food for the people" as the medium to translate his relationship with humankind.

Truly the Eucharist is a real, **interpersonal encounter between God and the worshipping community** precisely because Christ is body-and-blood present. We cannot have reverence for the body and blood of Christ, if we knock down those for whom he died out of love. Real reverence includes how we treat one another preceding and following the Eucharist. The Christ I receive in Communion is the same Jesus the person next to me receives. He unites us one to the other while uniting us all to himself. Real reverence has to be for the person of Christ and

⁷³ EE 34

⁷⁴ EE 22

for all people for whom he died: the two are inseparable. That is why people are called the Body of Christ. The bond of togetherness and communion created by the Eucharist should go beyond differences of caste, class, ethnicity and economic background. It leaves no room for personal egoism, self-ambition, or collective hatred.

"Those who say, 'I love God,' and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars..." (1 Jn 4:20). We cannot abuse one another, if we recognize that we all come from the same womb of God, signed and sealed in the body-and-blood relationship we have in Christ. No one is to be excluded from our love. How much we can injure ourselves by holding so many grudges, bad feelings and unflattering things that are born from our own prejudices and over-sensitivities! The "Our Father" – during which we ask for God's forgiveness, could be an opportune moment to remember all those who have done us the greatest harm during our life, embrace them close to our bosom, and forgive them and wish them peace.

"The Eucharist is an epiphany of communion," says Pope John Paul II.⁷⁵ The Eucharistic community is an inclusive community, gathering everyone with his/ her particular complexion and rhythm, songs and dances, music and dreams. **Jesus invites everyone to the Eucharistic table**, irrespective of their social standing: the sinners and the saints, the good and the not so good, the old and the young, the rich and the poor alike. It is a contradiction and a scandal to participate in the Eucharistic communion if one does not realize the communion with the brethren. "Wherever communion with God is destroyed, the root and source of our communion with one another is destroyed. And wherever we do not live in communion among ourselves, communion with the Triune God is not alive and true either."⁷⁶

Communion always has both a vertical and horizontal sense: it is communion with God and communion with our brothers and sisters. The Eucharist is the sacrament of communion between brothers and sisters who allow themselves to be reconciled in Christ. Only this constant **impulse towards reconciliation enables us to participate worthily in the Body and Blood of Christ**. Drawing society together itself is a great mission today in a fragmented world, when people feel pull apart in all directions by forces beyond their control: ethnic hatred, political exploitation, collective greed.

"Let us remember that it is so natural a thing to love those who are good, who love us and help us, who are friendly and nice. But to love the enemies, those who disagree with us, to tolerate, sympathize and bear with the defects of others, to keep their failings a secret, to toil leaving the credit to others, is the real charity that generates a delicious peace. Let us invoke the Virgin at the blessed grotto, especially on Christmas Eve, for that charity by which we learn to hide whatever is not praiseworthy in others, to always see the good in others, and the defects in ourselves."⁷⁷

The bond of communion among the members of a religious fraternity is modeled on the communion brought about by the Eucharist: to be authentic witnesses of the divine,

⁷⁵ Pope Benedict XVI: *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, 21

⁷⁶ *Sacramentum Caritatis* 76

⁷⁷ 16.12.1915: Cir. Let. 32

extensions of Jesus who loves, values and cherishes every human being. “It was always Francis’ anxious wish and careful watchfulness to preserve among his sons the bond of unity, so that those whom the same Spirit drew together and the same Father brought forth might be nurtured peacefully in the bosom of one mother.”⁷⁸ For Clare, meeting others meant discovering in them the work of creation, a work that God loves and respects: a love and respect that confer on each person the right to be loved and respected as an individual by everyone. She exhorted the sisters to “*be always eager to preserve among themselves the unity of mutual love which is the bond of perfection.*”⁷⁹

According to Mother Seraphina, our communities are invited **to be tabernacles of communion**, places of relationships where one breathes in human warmth, mutual respect, affection, acceptance of diversity, etc. Our relationship with the triune God demands a communion which heals wounds, builds bridges, promotes and strengthens interpersonal bonds.⁸⁰

*“Would that it were said of us as of the early Christians, that **we are of one heart and one soul!** Oh that our desire to dominate others or to vindicate the violation of our rights might never be the cause for breaking the bond of Christian peace among our brethren! Meek and gentle, may we ever safeguard the treasure of fraternal charity in all humility and quietude!”*⁸¹

To be tabernacles of communion is the challenge for us CFMSS today: to measure ourselves against this ideal of communion: a ‘spirituality of communion’ which fosters reciprocal openness, affection, understanding and forgiveness. It follows, then, that I cannot withdraw myself from this “tabernacle”, or reject any sister or anyone I am bound to serve, without rejecting Christ himself, and cutting myself off from this unity – so desired by Seraphina. The Church today says that the key feature of fraternity is tenderness, *a Eucharistic tenderness*⁸². Our communities, therefore, are to become more and more places of welcome and forgiveness, where one learns to share the joys and sufferings, to infuse hope, to safeguard tenderness, compassion, attentive listening etc. To witness to evangelical unity our fraternal life has to move from “life in common” towards ‘communion of life’ and become a prophecy to the world against the individualism, fragmentation and loneliness of our time. “The humanizing power of the Gospel is witnessed by the fraternity lived in community and is created through welcome, respect, mutual help, understanding, kindness, forgiveness and joy.”⁸³

Reflection:-

- ♥ “How sad it is when our hearts are closed and unable to forgive! Resentment, anger and revenge gain the upper hand, making our lives miserable..”(Pope Francis: Mm 8)
- Am I willing to receive Jesus in Communion along with those who cause me suffering/ who criticize me/ speak ill of me?

⁷⁸2 Celano 191

⁷⁹Rule of St. Clare, X: 6

⁸⁰ Cf. EG 67

⁸¹ 17.11.1892: Mother Seraphina’s Prayer to St. Clement, Fasc. LIII

⁸² Cf. Rejoice 9

⁸³Keep Watch, 18

- ♥ Do I turn away from the suffering of others and try to lead a comfortable life free of problems?
- ♥ How is my Eucharistic worship translated into my everyday life? What gestures do I perform that can reach/ influence people's very lives?
- ♥ Does my participation in the Eucharistic worship enable me to achieve personal integration and become a person who promotes unity and communion?

4: I Carry the Mysteries: Living the Eucharist throughout the Day

“I carry the Mysteries! And carrying them I contemplate them ecstatically with Magdalene who absorbed in the Highest Good, loves Him and feels loved in return; or like John who leaning on the Divine Master’s breast listens to His words. As the prodigal son, I narrate to Him my faults and kiss His holy feet, bathing them with my tears and imploring Him to cleanse and purify me with His touch...”⁸⁴

The motto “*Porto iMisteri*” (= I Carry the Mysteries) is the key that the Venerable Foundress has given to her daughters to live the Eucharistic-Missionary Charism in their everyday life and missionary endeavors. To be a **Jesus-bearer, a consecrated vessel holding God’s Son** is a powerful image that Seraphina engraved for herself and her daughters to live a Eucharistic life.

Mary carried Jesus not only in her womb; she also carried him with love in her heart. We can be certain that during the months of pregnancy Our Lady spoke with the Son of God, who was in her womb. Along with Joseph, Mary goes to Bethlehem to be registered for the census decreed by the Romans. This is the second Eucharistic procession. The first one took place when Our Lady had gone to help Elizabeth. During both the journeys Mary adored, prayed, sang, recited psalms in God the Son's honour incarnated inside herself. “When, at the Visitation, she bore in her womb the Word made flesh, **she became the first “tabernacle” in history**”⁸⁵

“Mary was constantly engaged in the household chores, yet her works never interfered with even an iota of her contemplation”⁸⁶.

The powerful image of the CFMSS as consecrated virgins holding the “Mystery of Mysteries”, is to imitate the Virgin Mother whose every thought, word and deed were centered on the Divine foetus she carried within. Like her we have to fix our gaze on him, think of him, remember him with love, as we go about our mundane tasks. It is to be **“pregnant” with Jesus in our everyday life** so as to be a source of life for others just as the Virgin Mary was a channel of grace for Elizabeth and her babe.

“Let not the duty of keeping company with Martha hurt us, because if we wish, we can very well unite the sublime stillness of Mary to the activities of her sister... I tell you

⁸⁴ 08.06.1898: Cir. No. 4

⁸⁵ Pope St. John Paul II: Ecclesia de Eucharistia, 55-57

⁸⁶ 01.08.1897: *Memoirs, Fasc. XXIX*

that in whatever state or condition we might be, we can carry on an intimate colloquy with God and carve in the innermost chamber of our heart a sacred niche closed to everyone but God."⁸⁷

It is through the constant remembrance of Jesus that God comes to dwell in our soul and make them his temples. It is a constant striving to live a life farthest from the shadow of evil, doing only what the Father wills and continuously yielding to the purifying action of the Holy Spirit.

*"Had Peter remembered of having received Jesus into his heart, he would never have denied Him. Remember throughout the day of having welcomed Jesus into your hearts. **Such a remembrance sweetens my pain, mellows the abandonment of creatures – real or imagined, relieves my fatigue and lightens my duty. I carry the Mystery and because of it I am enabled to be impartial with everyone, gentle towards those who hurt me, happy and content in prosperity just as in adversity, gathering whatever comes my way as authentic thanksgiving or in preparation for receiving the Mysteries.**"*⁸⁸

When the memory of Jesus seeps into our heart and mind, the Spirit will enable us to crush all negative thoughts: pride, self-gratification, anger, uncharitable consideration, or sexual urges. The mission of every CFMSS is to carry the One who carries us, to set out with the Word towards all humanity: towards "*New frontiers, new realities, other cultures, different necessities, peripheries.*"⁸⁹ The constant awareness of God's indwelling presence in us – the remembrance that "we carry the Sacred Mysteries deep within us", not only builds better inter-personal relationships, by enabling us to forgive and befriend those who hurt us, or making us more committed to our duty, but also stimulates us to move out of our comfort zone towards those in the peripheries of the world, and fosters our growth in holiness. Mother Seraphina exhorts us to spend each day in preparation and thanksgiving, remembering throughout the day that we have received Jesus.

*"Remember, my daughters, the tabernacle that encloses our Beloved. Rather, **make a tabernacle of your heart**, the more pleasing to Jesus, the more the latter excels the former."*⁹⁰

If we are immersed in the Eucharistic Jesus, if we carry him in our hearts, in our life, in our communities and ministries, we will indeed carry the Eucharistic spirit everywhere and recognize his presence all around us. The Eucharist restores to us our humanity, makes us other-centered, healing our wounds and illuminating our relational experiences. The Eucharist opens us to trust, to hope, to new relationships, to rediscover the other as a gift, as sisters or brothers.

"The more that you unite yourself to Christ and he becomes the centre of your life, the more he leads you out of yourself, leads you from making yourself the centre and opens you to others. This is the true dynamism of love; this is the movement of God himself! God is the centre, but he is always self-gift, relationship, love that gives itself

⁸⁷ 03.12.1882: Mother Seraphina, *A Word to the Teachers*, Fasc. XXI

⁸⁸ 08.06.1898: Cir. No. 4

⁸⁹ *Keep Watch* 11

⁹⁰ 02.01.1903: Circular let. 13

away . . . and this is what we will become if we remain united to Christ. He will draw us into this dynamism of love. Where there is true life in Christ, there follows an openness to others, and so a going out from oneself to encounter others in the name of Christ.”⁹¹

Reflection

“God continues to speak to us today as to friends. He dwells in our midst in order to accompany us and show us the path of life.” (Pope Francis: Mm 6)

- ♥ What are the concrete acts of tenderness that I do to show God’s presence and closeness to the weak and the vulnerable?
- ♥ Am I aware of the new forms of poverty and marginalization that prevent people from living a life of dignity for lack of the necessities of life?

4.1: Called to be a Tabernacle of the Mystery of the Eucharistic Lord

“The Eucharist is the flame of our charity for the God who imprisons Himself for love of us, moves us to love Him and communicating Himself to us, enkindles in our hearts the fire of Divine Love. In essence this is charity.”⁹²

In her devotion to the Eucharistic Jesus, Mother Seraphina instinctively looks up to St. Clare – the Saint of the Eucharist, the archetype of the Eucharistic devotion, the only person portrayed with the Mystery in hand. To “Carry the Mysteries” like Clare is to **communicate the fruits of one’s contemplation** or experience of God’s love and mercy to all those with whom we interact in our day-to-day life: first and foremost to those living under the same roof, sharing the same table, yet hungry for love and understanding.

“Would that your activities were rooted in the ciborium! O how balmy is the breeze from the tabernacle! How fragrant his perfume! The name of Jesus is so casually taken, but the soul who has tasted his sweetness repeats it uninterruptedly, and still more lovingly receives him into her heart.”⁹³

The very thought that **our body is a “living monstrance” holding the consecrated Host** should impel us to grow not only in holiness and intimacy with the Eucharistic Lord, but also to grow in fraternal love, respecting and loving each sister as a “living tabernacle”. We cannot have reverence for the Body and Blood of Christ, if we knock down those for whom he died out of love. For this reason, people are the Body of Christ, especially our own co-sisters and those with whom we rub our shoulders on a daily basis. “Truly, I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me” (Mt. 25:45). Hence, to “Carry the Mysteries” is **to go beyond oneself in self-gifting to others after the example of the self-emptying love of Jesus in the Sacrament of Love**. In short, it is a self-emptying movement of love in order to be other-centered, moving out of one’s comfort zone towards

⁹¹27.9. 2013: Pope Francis, *Homily at the International Congress on Catechesis*

⁹² Memoirs, Fasc. LXVIII, p. 45

⁹³ 27.07.1897: Let. To Sr. Cecilia, Let. 247, Fasc. VI-VII

the other: the lonely and the forsaken, the forgotten and the least ones, elbowed out by all in the mad worship of self-glory and self-gratification.

The motto *I Carry the Mysteries* which Mother Seraphina often repeats should reawaken all our attention towards Jesus Christ who gives himself to us in the Eucharist and transforms us with his grace, if we allow him to act in us. It is a call to be a **“bearer of Christ” generating Him throughout the day in the hearts of men and women** by their exemplary life. Each CFMSS is to generate Jesus in the hearts of relapsed Christians, in those who live in the darkness of sin and confusion, as our Seraphic Father exhorts the believers in his *Letter to the Faithful*. (Let. Fid: 53)

Reflection:

“God places no roadblocks in the way of those who seek him with a contrite heart... His mercy is at work in changing, converting and reforming human hearts.”(Pope Francis: Mm 9,11)

- ♥ How do I reach out to so many of our brothers and sisters, especially the Non-Christians and draw them to experience the love of the merciful Saviour?
- ♥ Am I willing to walk patiently the extra mile beside the people entrusted to me on their life’s journey so that Christ may be born in them and each one experience his closeness?
- ♥ *“This people honours me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me.” (Is. 29:13)*
 - Do I deserve this reproach?

5: Holy Hour: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

*“The hallmark and emblem of our Institute is the devotion to the Most Blessed Sacrament. I would like to see this God of Love exposed every day and all honour and glory paid to him, because **to me the adoration of the Holy Mysteries is an innate need of the heart**. To enjoy on earth the delight of Paradise, with the sole difference that here we contemplate him under a dense fog, whereas in Paradise in the fullness of his glory...However, our duties do not allow us to indulge the impulses of the heart and so we limit the Exposition to the Solemn days of Corpus Christi, its Octave, Sacred Heart, Name of Jesus, Immaculate Conception, St. Francis and St. Clare, entry into the novitiate, Profession, First Fridays of the month, Lenten Fridays, Ascension, Pentecost, Holy Trinity and Annunciation; on other feast days, if duty permits. In the filial houses Exposition is decided upon according to the personnel and nature of circumstances”.*

*May Jesus exposed in the Blessed Host pour out his abundant graces and may **his light enliven the whole house!** If it is possible, or if you think it right, I would like the vigil to be kept on the night between first Thursday and first Friday, or on similar nights. Sitting at the foot of the altar in sweet acts of love, in the silence and solitude of the night, the soul is swiftly raised to God and tastes the repose of contemplation.⁹⁴*

⁹⁴Practical Guide Ch. XI

Rendering public worship to the Blessed Sacrament is a tradition that dates back to the eleventh century when the Neo-Manichaeian heretics like the Albigensians, Waldenses, Cathari, Humiliati et al undermined the faith of the Catholics. Berengar of Tour's denial of Christ's presence in the Eucharist sparked the custom of exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. While Berengar claimed that Jesus was only symbolically present in the Eucharist, St. Francis cultivated the highest expression of love for Eucharistic adoration and for everything that is connected to the veneration of the Eucharist. He also encouraged his friars to increase their own devotion to the Eucharist: "... I implore all of you brothers to show all possible reverence and honour to the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in whom that which is in heaven and on earth has been brought to peace and reconciled to almighty God."⁹⁵

A true daughter of St. Francis and St. Clare – the saint of the Eucharist, Seraphina prized the moments spent before the tabernacle, praising and adoring Jesus in this ineffable sacrament of Love. For her "*the adoration of the Holy Mysteries was the inborn need of her heart:*" to lose herself in adoration of the Divine Prisoner, to whisper to him words of love, to implore mercy for the sinners and the sinned against, to expiate the escalating sins of humankind. She was not only enamoured of the Eucharistic Jesus, but did all in her power to instill in her sisters, students and the people in the parish a gripping awareness of Christ's powerful presence in the tabernacle.

*"Homage to Jesus in the Eucharist should be a devotion so very close to the heart of the novice: the God of love who sacrifices Himself on our altars, who encloses Himself in our tabernacles and who gives Himself to us as our food. **The rays emanating from the spotless Host converge on those who ask for light, to set on fire those who ask for love.**"⁹⁶*

Reflection:-

- ♥ "Just as you can't be exposed to the sun without receiving its rays, neither can you come to Jesus exposed in the Blessed Sacrament without receiving the divine rays of his grace, his love, his peace." How true is this statement in my life?
- ♥ Am I convinced of what Pope Paul VI states in *Mysterium Fidei*: "*How great is the value of conversation with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, for there is nothing more efficacious for advancing along the road of holiness!*"

5.1: Night Vigil

"Jesus dwelling on our altars as a Victim, makes a continuous immolation of Himself to His Eternal Father; and it can be said that He renews His sacrifice on the Cross

⁹⁵St. Francis: *Letter to the Order* 12-13

⁹⁶21.04.1896/ 16.03.1901: *Rules and Regulation for the Novitiate*, Chapter V, Fasc. XXIV

⁹⁶ 21.04.1896/ 16.03.1901: *Rules and Regulation for the Novitiate*, Chapter XIV, Fasc. XXIV

not only in the Holy Mass, but every moment of His sacramental presence among us."⁹⁷

The Holy Hour or night watch is the classic expression of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, which Seraphina borrowed from Marguerite Mary Alaquoque and made it her own, both in intent and in fact.

*"The Holy Hour from 11 pm to midnight in turn, was introduced at the Badia on March 12, 1896: a pious exercise that fuses the active and contemplative life ... This devotional exercise was taught by Jesus himself to the Blessed Alaquoque; undoubtedly it is quite pleasing to his adorable Heart."*⁹⁸

Each sister has to be a **victim of love and sacrifice, of adoration and atonement**, of thanksgiving and petition, and "make her own the happiness and sorrows of the Beloved." "Could you not watch one hour with me?" (Mt 6:21; 26:40) The specific way that Jesus asks us to love him in return is to spend one quiet hour with him in the Blessed Sacrament.

Certainly Jesus himself had brought about this practice because on my own I wouldn't have thought of doing so. Nor could I have ever dared to hope that it was possible. Some mysterious power has introduced it, and to my surprise it has continued up to now. Certainly Jesus wants us to keep the night vigil, for he has made it known that it is a homage most pleasing to his adorable heart in expiation for the abandonment of his dear ones as well as that of our own."⁹⁹

She introduced the Holy Hour from 11-12 pm at first at the Badia and later in the larger communities, leaving the individual sisters free to participate in it or not. Yet she asserts that **sisters vied with each other to be present at the night vigil** so much so she had to rein in their competition.¹⁰⁰

*"I trust that this hour of night vigil will make us united to the angelic choirs in heaven. Oh, how sweetly ascend the prayers and sighs to the heart of God in the silence of the night! They bring peace to the world, comfort to the afflicted and conversion to the sinners. It is a marvelous blend of the contemplative and active life such that the latter is not deprived of the sweetness of the former which accompanies and perfects every act of the other. Those who keep the night vigil do not join the day adoration, but are free to do so on feast days. O Jesus, grant to thy spouses a taste of the sweetness of contemplation."*¹⁰¹

More than a century later we have Pope Francis attesting to the need for time spent before the Blessed Sacrament: "Without prolonged moments of adoration, of prayerful encounter with the Word, of sincere conversation with the Lord, **our work easily becomes meaningless**; we lose energy as a result of weariness and difficulties, and our fervour dies out." (EG 262)

⁹⁷ 21.04.1896/ 16.03.1901: *Rules and Regulation for the Novitiate*, Chapter XIV, Fasc. XXIV

⁹⁸ First Draft of the Constitution, Ch. IV

⁹⁹ 16.3.1898: *Sisters' Horarium, The Holy Hour*, Fasc. 26

¹⁰⁰ 18.04.1907: Seraphina's let. to Abbot Lolli, Fasc. LII. P. 6-8

¹⁰¹ *Practical Guide*, Ch. VII

The **Thursday vigil** was held specifically as **an act of reparation for the sins, negligence**, insults, blasphemies and sacrileges committed against the Sacrament of Love by men and women, in particular the consecrated persons. Seraphina was convinced that an hour with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament will repair for evils of the world and bring about peace on earth.

"Where your treasure is, there is your heart...."(Mt 6:21) Each moment that we spend in His Eucharistic Presence will increase his divine life within us and deepen our personal relationship and friendship with him. Seraphina appealed to her sisters, novices and postulants to **cherish the priceless treasure of having Jesus with us day in and day out**, to spend time with Him in silent adoration, to make reparation, by our faith and love for the acts of carelessness and neglect, and even the insults which our Saviour must endure in many parts of the world, and to find meaning and fulfillment to their lives by growing in intimacy and friendship with Him.

*"The night watch is held in turn every day in the Novitiate House, but it is not compulsory. It is the tribute that we, the sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, pay to our Celestial Spouse enclosed in the ciborium. It is the hallmark of our Institute. You know well that we just cannot explain how this pleasant practice was introduced and continued to date. To pray every night at the very hour when the gentlest Saviour is offended in the theatres and the clubs."*¹⁰²

In Chapter VII of the *Practical Guide* Mother Seraphina explains in detail the instructions for observing the Holy Hour: *"Every first Thursday of the month the adorers shall be drawn by lot. Care should be taken that there is no shortage of persons; and that their monthly turn is written in a proper booklet.*

- *In case if one is prevented from keeping the night vigil either due to illness, or for some other reason, she is free to adore at any hour of the day, or even from 9-10 pm; but she should inform the Animator so that she may be substituted.*
- *It can be omitted on some rarest day (Oh, my heart breaks to write this!), so that this custom may not become a rule.*
- *The adorers are permitted to rest till 11 o' clock, just as they are allowed to stay awake till 11 o'clock. What are two hours for those who love? I prefer prayer to work. Without prior permission, no one is permitted to stay longer, once the clock strikes the midnight hour.*
- *There should be no daily night vigil in the filial houses with less than 12 or 15 members. Let them observe it whenever they can, at least every Thursday in turn, unless there is some serious impediment.*
- *But every house shall keep the night vigil on First Thursdays – even at the cost of great sacrifice, in order to place ourselves before the sun who dispels all darkness, and to hide ourselves all united together in his adorable Heart.*¹⁰³

Inspired by Mons. Polloni's homily, she enthusiastically explains the interior disposition that should animate the sisters:

"How many times have we imitated the three Apostles who slept through His agony? Let us keep our vigil at the Garden of Olives with the Blessed Virgin, St. John and

¹⁰²*Practical Guide: Ch. VII*

¹⁰³ *Practical Guide: Ch. VII*

Mary Magdalene in order to make reparation. "Meditate on Jesus in the Cenacle, who in the act of saying good bye to his disciples in order to go and die for us, instituted the Sacrament of Love.

Enter the Divine Heart and listen to His heartbeat, see the flames leaping forth from it. Nevertheless, turn your eyes to that villain possessed by the devil, committing the first act of sacrifice! St. John says that Satan had entered that wicked soul... O my God! This evening wander among the trees in the Garden of Olives in search of Jesus, you will hear from afar the groans of that suffering heart...Go closer, kneel down there and ask Him for whom he is agonizing. You will see his blood falling before you; reverently gather it, which is a prize of your ransom" (Mons. Polloni: 12.02.1898)¹⁰⁴

Thus the night vigil - introduced at the Badia on 12 March 1896 and gradually developed as a special praxis of the new religious family of the CFMSS, became an inexhaustible source of vitality, enlightenment, renewal and holiness not only for Seraphina but also for all those sisters initially formed by her, especially the pioneer missionaries. More than an act of atonement, the Holy Hour is a particular means to attain that blend of contemplation and action towards which our Eucharistic-Missionary charism aims. To quote Pope John Paul II, "If in our times Christians must be distinguished by the 'art of prayer', how can we not feel a renewed yearning to spend time in spiritual converse, in silent adoration, in heartfelt love before Christ present in the Most Holy Sacrament? **How often have I experienced this, and drawn from it strength, consolation and support!**"¹⁰⁵ Pope Benedict teaches that adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is a foretaste of the beauty of the heavenly liturgy.¹⁰⁶

*"I wish to pay solemn homage to Jesus Christ the Redeemer, with a **Forty Hours' Adoration** in September. Aren't we Franciscans of the Most Blessed Sacrament? Doesn't it befit then, that we offer a **solemn act of reparation and love** to our Beloved?"¹⁰⁷*

In our age so inundated with sound and noise, in the form of MP3 players, cell phones and computers, the Eucharistic adoration is a potent tool to attract those persons, especially the young, who are drawn to silent prayer. Because they are so visually saturated with videos, television and the Internet, they are drawn to the visual beauty created when gazing on the Sacramental Lord in a setting of flickering candles, incense, and other signs and symbols which create an atmosphere of prayer.

"I will be very happy to have the 40 hours' adoration during the carnival as a deterrent to the innumerable offences committed against Jesus. I hope there will be a crowd in the church."¹⁰⁸

Reflection:-

- ♥ Is Jesus the true magnet of my heart? Do I find myself drawn to Jesus no matter what?

¹⁰⁴ Practical Guide, Ch. VII

¹⁰⁵ Ecclesiae de Eucharistia 25

¹⁰⁶ Sacramentum Caritatis 66

¹⁰⁷ 18.05.1901: Cir. Let. 10

¹⁰⁸ 11.11.1901: Let. To Sr. Nazzarena, Let. 491, Fasc. X - XI

- ♥ Do I experience an inner longing to be in the presence of the Eucharistic Lord?
- ♥ Do I willingly share in the sufferings of Christ saturated with opprobrium and console him as far as humanly possible?

- ♥ *"Our essential commitment in life is to preserve and advance constantly in Eucharistic life and Eucharistic piety and to grow spiritually in the climate of the Holy Eucharist."* (Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Hominum*).

- **Do I grow spiritually with each moment I spend with Jesus?**

5.2: *The Eucharistic Day*

*"The Eucharistic Day dedicated to the Divine love! It is held on a monthly turn, beginning with the Mother house, followed by Rome and so on. It will be quite wonderful if in some houses it is convenient to hold it in the parish church, because Jesus will come to be adored by the people more and more, and make the day of Love much more solemn. By the very fact that we are His and to us is given the duty of spreading Adoration throughout the world, we, His faithful handmaids, should make Him known by this new means. Aren't we the littlest and the humblest Missionaries of the Blessed Sacrament?"*¹⁰⁹

The Eucharistic Day consists in the celebration of a day wholly dedicated to the adoration of the Eucharistic Jesus, intercession for various needs of the people we serve, and above all, being *"moulded in the spirit of the tabernacle."* In her last Circular Letter dictated from her sick bed on 31st March 1917 – which is almost her testament to her daughters, Seraphina requested the communities to keep a special **Eucharistic Day** to intercede for the termination of the war and to recommend to the divine mercy the war-mongers and their victims, the soldiers in the battle-field, the wounded and the maimed in the field-hospitals and the families devastated by the war. She instructed Sr. Catherine, her Assistant to draw up a list of communities so that **the day-long exposition of the Blessed Sacrament** – *"fount of infinite graces and copious blessing"* – is daily carried out on Institute level.

*"Mother wishes that Jesus be adored by us day and night. Through this means she has thought of invoking solace and peace for our times so rife with pain and grief. May the peace that surpasses every sense penetrate the hearts of the Rulers and impel them to put an end to the appalling scourge that lacerates the nations!...For this purpose, so noble and so ardently longed for by the war-weary men groaning in the battlefield, our Mother, has decided to fix a day of special celebration for each convent every month."*¹¹⁰

Like Moses (Ex. 17: 2-7/ 32; 11-14), the CFMSS were to hold up the arms of prayer against the terrible scourge that menaced the people from every side. Like Jesus, they were to intercede for the victims of the battle that rendered many a family homeless and many nations sucked into the vortex of the war.

¹⁰⁹ 31.03.1917: Circular Letter dictated to Catherine Farolfi

¹¹⁰31.03.1917, Circ. Letter written by Catherine to the sisters

The monthly Eucharistic Day - a novelty that Seraphina introduced in her Institute almost as a parting gift at the close of her earthly sojourn –was dedicated to the adoration of the Eucharistic Jesus by all the communities in turn, in such a way that “chain adoration” is observed by the Institute as a whole. The devotion which began in the thick of the First World War has become a hallmark of the CFMSS in the 21st century, especially in the Indian Provinces. This “spiritual strategy”, besides fostering unity among the communities whether in Italy or abroad, encourages them to rise above individual spirituality and be more attentive to the communitarian and ecclesial dimension, cancelling distance and thus promoting a strong common identity.

Reflection:-

- ♥ How meaningfully do we celebrate the Eucharistic Day on personal/communitarian level?
- ♥ *“Through adoration, the Christian mysteriously contributes to the radical transformation of the world and to the sowing of the Gospel. Anyone who prays to the Saviour draws the whole world with him and raises it to God. Those who stand before the Lord are presenting to Christ all those who do not know him or are far from him; they keep watch in his presence on their behalf.”¹¹¹*
- **How far am I committed to this Eucharistic mission?**
- ♥ Pope John Paul II exhorts us in *Dominica Cenae*: *"Let us be generous with our time in going to meet Jesus and ready to make reparation for the great evils of the world."*
- Do I take the time to kneel before the Blessed Sacrament, in order to make reparation by my faith and love for the acts of carelessness and neglect, and even the insults which our Saviour must endure in many parts of the world?

5.3: Being fashioned by Jesus at the foot of the Tabernacle

*“If we do not mould our spirit at the foot of the tabernacle, our mission becomes rather harmful than fruitful”.*¹¹²

God wants us to love Him; He wants our whole heart, not just a part of it. What He wants us to do therefore, is to love Him as He loves us. We are to love Him, therefore, unqualifyingly, totally. To stand face to face before the Eucharistic Lord day after day is to gaze upon Jesus with the eyes of our heart, centering all our thoughts, emotions and dreams into an act of love and adoration. It is to be gripped on the one hand by the depth of God’s infinite goodness, love and mercy and on the other hand by our own coldness and lack of response to this loving Lord abiding in the tabernacle.

“Unless I’m truly in love with the Eucharistic Jesus, I can never make another person fall in love with Him”¹¹³. This powerful statement can be taken as the essence of the

¹¹¹Pope John Paul II, Letter to Mgr Houssiau for the 750th anniversary of *Corpus Christi*, 28th June 1996

¹¹²25.03.1903: *Cir. Let. 14*, Fasc. XXVIII

¹¹³ First Draft of the Constitution

spirit that galvanized the soul of Mother Seraphina into transmitting to her daughters—sisters the priceless treasure of her charism, love for the Mystery of the Eucharist.

Pope Francis elaborates Seraphina's observation in his Address to the participants of the International Congress on Catechesis: "The first thing for a disciple is to be with the Master, to listen to Him and to learn from Him. This is always true; ... it is a journey that lasts for a lifetime. ... If the warmth of God, of his love, of his tenderness is not in our hearts, then how can we, who are poor sinners, warm the hearts of others?"¹¹⁴

Jesus present in the tabernacle must be a magnetic pole for each CFMSS. The call that we have received from Jesus is to be always with him (Mk 3:14). Since our life is measured by our encounter with Jesus, each one of us is called to 'stay' with Him, to develop a true, intimate and familiar relationship with the person of Jesus and to unite ourselves with Jesus: "abide in my love" (Jn 15:9). "If I am truly to communicate with another person I must know him, I must be able to be in silence close to him, to listen to him and look at him lovingly. True love and true friendship are always nourished by the reciprocity of looks, of intense, eloquent silence full of respect and veneration, so that the encounter may be lived profoundly and personally rather than superficially."¹¹⁵

Our prime concern is to be seated at the feet of Jesus listening to him; everything else takes second place. It is to "*open our soul to Jesus like the sick or the blind, so that He can fashion it into the image He wishes.*"¹¹⁶ It is to allow oneself to be daily set on fire with the Spirit's flame and to free one's potentialities to the full for the service of the Kingdom. Consequently, it is an effective and affective experience that efficaciously renders the total presence of the Eucharistic Jesus in us, enabling us to put on his own mind. Thus our everyday life and work sanctified by the Spirit will be **transformed into bread of life** and drink of salvation by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Seated before the tabernacle, alone with God, in silent adoration and attentive silence, each sister must learn to **gaze upon Jesus like "Mary Magdalene – the penitent, contemplative, grateful, compassionate soul yearning for Jesus - who teaches us how to seek Jesus, to listen to him, to love him"**¹¹⁷ "..., who enraptured contemplates sees Jesus in herself and herself in Jesus"¹¹⁸ and **who would not withdraw from her Master's presence even for a moment.**¹¹⁹ Resting in God's presence involves all the powers one has: all our understanding, affection, emotion and desire condensed into the single yearning: "Show me thy face, that I may know thee" (Ex. 33: 13). It is to let ourselves be transformed by Him, to have our lives fully conformed to Him.

The gradual effect of being seated before the Eucharistic Lord, day after day, is the discovery of the stark contrast between the resplendent beauty of our Beloved and our own sinfulness. The more we draw closer to Jesus, the more we find that our worldly desires and

¹¹⁴ Pope Francis' address to the participants of the International Congress on Catechesis

¹¹⁵ 07.06.2012: Pope Benedict XVI: Homily on Corpus Christi

¹¹⁶ *Practical Guide*, Ch. VI

¹¹⁷ *Practical Guide*, Ch. XII

¹¹⁸ *Practical Guide*, Ch. XII

¹¹⁹ 1897: First Draft of the Constitution, Ch. I

attitudes, thought pattern and behavior are not in line with the Gospel values. As we open ourselves to Him, we gain a deeper insight into our own nothingness and the crippling effect of sin. We become more and more aware of those dark, hidden areas of our self that we don't like to admit to ourselves or to God. "Draw closer to God, and He will draw closer to you" (Jam 4:8). To be moulded by Christ means to allow oneself to be changed: to be converted, turned around, until one leaves all self-seeking behind and seeks only God. It is a painful exercise geared towards the **realization of our nothingness**, the experience of the pain of our emptiness, the acceptance of our need for God at every turn, and the beginning of a **journey of self-emptying**.

Writing to Agnes, St. Clare exhorts her to "Gaze upon that Mirror each day, O Queen and Spouse of Jesus Christ, and continually study your face within it that you may adorn yourself within and without with beautiful robes, covered, as is becoming the daughter and most chaste bride of Most High King, with flowers and garment of all the virtues."¹²⁰ To adorn oneself within and without with the virtues perceived in the Christ-Mirror is to put on the mind of Christ, as the Apostle Paul says in Phil. 2:5. As a result of our looking into the "Mirror without blemish" with an open heart, day after day, our lives begin to fall into Christ-like pattern.... For to imitate Christ is to behave as he did in the practical details of everyday life: to live and move in God's presence as one goes about doing one's chores.

Interior transformation into the image of Christ –gradual and hidden - is the process of being moulded by Jesus. In order to reproduce in us the image of Jesus, we have to rid ourselves of all that hinder our union with him, let go of all that pull us away from him, and replace our ego by the Spirit of God, making more and more room for him by cleansing ourselves of all that is not of God. When we strive to assume the values and virtues, the priorities and plans of the Lord, we come in touch with our level of responsibility to let go of a personal, self-centered and self-promoting agenda and to take on other-centered life. If we cooperate with the Spirit's movements, we are made other-centred, healing our wounds and enlightening our relational experiences.

Being moulded in the spirit of the tabernacle is to be "regenerated each day in the unending contemplation of the face of Christ" from which our original "vocation to consecrated life was born, ...from the beauty and light which was seen shining on his face."¹²¹ Seraphina wants her daughters to develop such deep contemplation: to "*unite the sublime stillness of Mary to the activities of her sister Martha, ... to carve in the innermost chamber of our heart a sacred niche closed to everyone but God*" so that we can carry on an intimate colloquy with God, and enjoy therein the sweetness of silence and seclusion amidst the din and distractions of our routine tasks. "*This should rather be **our prime task**, the singular aim of our heart, to which all our energy should be channelled.*"

"In such sublime school we can relish the sweetness of Divine love, gather the rules for our whole life – the sure norms to guide our thoughts, words, affections and actions, learn to be punctual in all our duties, and gather all our tasks into our prayer. In this school of Divine Love the dawn of each day should be begun and all our activities concluded... In this school of celestial wisdom we shall come to know

¹²⁰ Clare's 4th letter to St. Agnes: 15-16

¹²¹ Cf. Pope John Paul II: *Starting Afresh from Christ*, 25

how injurious it is to usurp the rights of others; and how fraternal charity is wounded by tale-bearing."¹²²

Consecrated life is a "never ending formation,...reshaping the person in the likeness of the Son – "a progressive taking on the attitude of Christ:"¹²³ a process formed by everyday life. Magnetized by the Eucharist, Seraphina strove to draw the souls of her sisters, students and everyone she met in her day-to-day life, to the Lord of the Altar in order to have their lives transformed by His merciful, forgiving, self-giving love.

"During this year we must truly strive to become holy because time passes by, never to return. Yesterday morning during Holy Communion, I promised Jesus to do my best to acquire that equanimity which enables one to have a pleasant disposition and perfect charity. To foster interior silence, to examine myself every hour, to cling to the crucifix without being disheartened by my failings, to impose a penance on me while invoking the blood of redemption on my head. To note down in my diary the number of times I failed to keep my resolutions and to begin anew with greater alacrity, sustained by my faithful angel and under the guidance of our tenderest Mother Mary, imploring the Mysteries day and night for a complete victory.

*You also, my sisters, make the same resolution and if all or some of you already possess such a beautiful virtue, remember that there is no good that cannot be bettered... Therefore, let us whole-heartedly devote ourselves to reach the height of perfection and whenever we write to each other let us speak of our resolution, our pursuit of holiness in order to encourage one another... We shall then enjoy heaven on earth."*¹²⁴

Each hour we spend with Jesus on earth will leave our soul more beautiful and glorious. "All of us, gazing on the Lord's glory with unveiled faces, are being transformed from glory to glory into his very image" (2Cor 3:18).

Reflection:-

- ♥ Does our intimacy with the Eucharistic Lord add a dimension of **depth to our lives**; breathe a spirit into our commitments, relationships and services; bring a bit of **unction** to our words and thoughts?
- ♥ Do we draw energy from our inner life to live out the mission that Jesus has given to us of becoming a **leaven** in society, the **light** of the world?
- ♥ Do I take time out to evaluate my growth in living a Eucharistic-centered life?

6: Visit to the Blessed Sacrament

*"Visit to Jesus in the tabernacle is an act of reparation so dear to the Eucharistic Lord. This devotion is to atone for our own apathy to Jesus who is left alone on our altars."*¹²⁵

Frequent visits to the chapel are an effective means to remind oneself of the abiding presence of Jesus in the tabernacle and to whisper to him words of grateful love. "Such

¹²² 03.12.1882: *A Word to the Teachers*, Fasc. XXI

¹²³ Cf. *Starting Afresh from Christ*, 15

¹²⁴ 02.01.1903: Cir. Let. 13

¹²⁵ 16.03.1898: *Timetable for the Sisters*, Fasc. XXVI

visits are a sign of gratitude, an expression of love and acknowledgement of the Lord's presence", says Pope Paul VI in his Encyclical Letter *Mysterium Fidei*. Honouring the Divine Prisoner bound to our existence by the fetters of His love for humankind, is a specific devotion intended to console the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the indifference and ingratitude shown Him by the majority of Christians.

"If a novice passes by the chapel or church as she discharges her duties, she is free to enter it and greet Jesus warmly, saying: "I love you Jesus. You are my one love, my only love." How sweet, how exceedingly sweet it is to have heart-to-heart talk with Jesus, express our needs to Him, pledge our love and offer Him to the Eternal Father for us!

The Visit to the Blessed Sacrament done with love is very much an effective means to make us holy. *When we feel oppressed, disheartened, or sad let us run to Him in order to be comforted, strengthened and consoled. Yes, my daughters, pay frequent visits to Jesus. Remember that when St. Louis was sent on errands, he would invariably take the road that passes by a Church and if there was no time to stop by, he would open the door and whisper, "Jesus, you already know that I can't stop here, but I love you."*¹²⁶

Sr. Margherita Quadrelli - one of the witnesses, who testified for Mother Seraphina, says "A great devotee of the Blessed Sacrament, the Servant of God never ever wanted that Jesus should be left alone in the chapel."¹²⁷ Another witness, Sr. Angelica adds, "Whenever she could find time, Mother prayed before the Eucharistic Jesus."¹²⁸

"Visit to the Blessed Sacrament in common: the sisters, novices and postulants after lunch. The boarders may join the visit after supper whenever possible, or if it is convenient...(I was against praying soon after the meals; but Jesus asked me time and again for this expiatory act, especially on June 12, 1896 – the Feast of His adorable Heart exposed for public worship.

*And our Father, who having paid Him this homage along with us tasted sensible consolation, confirmed it with his blessing. I should rather say that we have been enjoined by him to follow this practice."*¹²⁹

Reflection:-

- ♥ How do I cultivate a lively awareness of Christ's presence in the tabernacle?
- ♥ "Jesus in the tabernacle wants you to be at his side, so that he can fill your hearts with the experience of his friendship, which alone gives meaning and fulfillment to our life," says Pope Benedict XVI.¹³⁰

- Do I take time out to visit Jesus during my day's chores and find new strength in his presence?

– Do I realize the importance of this practice as an effective tool to deepen my love for the Lord?

¹²⁶ 21.04.1896/ 16.03.1901: *Rules and Regulation for the Novitiate*, Chapter IV, Fasc. XXIV

¹²⁷ Sr. Margherita Quadrelli - one of the witnesses who testified for Mother Seraphina

¹²⁸ Ibid

¹²⁹ *Practical Guide*, Ch. VIII

¹³⁰ Pope Benedict XVI: *Mane nobiscum Domine*, 29

6.1: Appropriate care of the chapel and altar

“Jesus Christ who willed to be born in a stable, to dwell in a carpenter’s workshop and to die on the rugged wood of the cross, chose the beautiful, large, well-furnished Cenacle to institute the Mysteries. He left himself to us on that same night in which one betrayed him, another denied him and all the rest abandoned him...”¹³¹

Seraphina had learnt from the Seraphic Father Francis to give due respect to the house of God. In his Testament the Saint exclaims: “I see nothing corporally of the Most High Son of God except His most holy Body and Blood... I want to have these most holy mysteries honoured and venerated above all things and I want to reserve them in precious places” (Test 10-11). In one of his letters to the Custodians he exhorts them to admonish the friars, “to revere above all else the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ... to hold as precious the chalice, ciborium, corporals, altar linens, hosts, flower vases, lamps and everything that pertains to the sacrifice.”¹³² St. Francis asked St. Clare of Assisi to make corporals and pyxes to donate to poor churches where the most holy Body of the Lord was very poorly reserved.

The love for the House of the Lord is inseparable from the love for the Eucharist. **One cannot love Jesus and at the same time neglect his resting place.** Writing to Abbot Lolli, Seraphina affirms: “*It is quite pleasant for us Franciscans of the Blessed Sacrament to work like St. Clare for the Church.*”¹³³ She urges the Sister-in-charge of the chapel:

*“The Sacristan should do her utmost to deck the altar. The temple, even if it is of all gold, would be nothing before God. O that **all the wealth is poured into the house of the Lord!** Utmost decorum, cleanliness, order and aesthetics even in the smallest object used for the worship of the Celestial Spouse. ... Would that we Franciscans worked like St. Clare, not only for our own chapel but for all the Churches in the world, and provide them with purificators and corporals that come into contact with the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ!”¹³⁴*

Echoes of Seraphina’s injunction to the sisters can be found in the Apostolic Instruction, *Eucharisticum mysterium* that reinforces the nobility and adornments of the location wherein the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. (EM 54)

the Eucharist, the work of our redemption is accomplished, and it is through the liturgy,

7: The Holy Week: the Core of the Eucharistic Spirituality

Seraphina sought to conform herself to Jesus all through the Liturgical Cycle of the year in order to feel ever closely united to Christ and in him to the Father. Such a

¹³¹ Cir. Letter 4

¹³² St. Francis: *1 Letter to the Custodians* 7

¹³³ 29.03.1914: Let. to Abbot Lolli, Let. 49, Fasc. XXXIX

¹³⁴ 1901 - 1903: *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXXVIII, Fasc. XXV

programme of life makes Seraphina give due weightage to the Liturgy, “through which, especially in the divine sacrifice of especially, that the faithful are enabled to express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Christ.”¹³⁵

In Mother Seraphina’s writing, we find precise references to the Magisterial teachings, for example:

“The feasts of the Mother Church are a prelude to Paradise; but to enjoy their beneficial effects we need to prepare ourselves in prayer, so that the Lord may reveal to us as far as possible the greatness of the Mysteries being celebrated...Oh how sweet it is to be united to the Mother Church, to penetrate its spirit which is the same as that of Christ, to cling to him in faith and love!...How delightful it is to be united to the Church in praising God with His own praises!”¹³⁶

The Holy Week, above all Maundy Thursday, is the most significant Liturgical “area” to penetrate the Eucharistic Mystery; and Mother Seraphina never gets tired of exhorting her daughters to deeply interiorize the Paschal Mystery through the various celebrations:

*“Holy Thursday is the day of the Mysteries, the most adorable and memorable day! But who thinks about it? It was a splurge and frenzy of love. .. Poor Jesus, how he is requited! Every CFMSS **should be lost in wonder during that hour when Jesus instituted the Sacrament of Love**. Propagate the devotion to the Mystery of Love and be assured that you will become saints, great saints.*

Holy Thursday is the anniversary of the Mystery. The Church, not being able to explain on that day the magnificence of the worship in honour of the Eucharist, has established the feast of Corpus Christi to solemnize it with due pomp and glory.”

*“The Franciscans of the Blessed Sacrament shall **never leave Jesus and Mary alone from Maundy Thursday to Easter**, following them from the Cenacle through the garden of Olives, to Calvary and Sepulcher...*

On Thursday night there shall be at least 12 adorers to atone for the abandonment of Jesus by the Apostles; for the other hours, or one or more adorer according to the persons available. Wherever possible, one should attend all the functions of the Holy Week, along with the public, as advised by the local superior...

*The adorers in the filial Houses shall be determined by the state of health and personnel...During these most important days **our hearts should be a flame of love** – all united in the wounded Heart of Love...*

*The Mother House shall be dedicated to the Eucharistic Jesus and shall be called **Corpus Domini of Badia of Bertinoro**.”¹³⁷*

Quite interesting is this keen attention to the Easter Triduum, which makes all the kerygmatic import of the Blessed Sacrament to stand out as the source and summit of

¹³⁵ SC, 2

¹³⁶Rule for the Novitiate. Ch. 5

¹³⁷Practical Guide, Ch. XI

Christian faith and gives to the Eucharistic devotion a decisive Christo-centric connotation, remarkably detaching it from the typical romantic sentimentalism of the devotion of her times.

In the *Regulations for Postulants and Novices* Seraphina writes:

*“The postulant must be glad to keep company of her Crucified Love, knowing well that the beloved make her own the joys and sorrows of the lover...such considerations will induce her to willingly undergo suffering as well as to entreat the Lord for more suffering, fully aware that true love springs from pain and sorrow. In the school of affliction one acquires strong generous love – a love that generates martyrs, virgins, holy men and women.”*¹³⁸

7.1: Corpus Christi

Seraphina lived the salient events of Redemption that the Liturgical year commemorated and exhorted her daughters to be in love with each event. Maundy Thursday and Corpus Christi were two sweetest days for her – days to be spent in rendering homage and worship to the Lord present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. On the occasion of the Corpus Christi procession, she wrote to her sisters:

*“...Tomorrow the Mysteries will be triumphantly carried along the streets of the whole world! Rejoice in the homage being paid to the Eucharistic Lord, our Celestial Spouse and **pray for the wicked who always offend Him in the Sacrament of Love**, for those agnostics who refuse to know him, and for each one of us who love him so little. I think that the greatest pain suffered by Jesus is caused by the coldness of the chosen souls...*

*Tomorrow, as you receive this letter, go and join the procession, praising Jesus together with the angels who throng the streets by which the Divine Lamb passes. Whoever can see the angels, will learn to follow Jesus. **May your love be a bulwark against all the sacrileges!** As the bell rings out for the feast, let the pure flame of your love leap forth: a flame that will never be extinguished!.....*

*As I write this, there springs up in me a longing to love Jesus and to invite the whole world to glorify him...Let us open wide our heart...and live with Jesus.”*¹³⁹

In this Circular Letter dated 8 June 1898, written on the occasion of Corpus Christi – just a month after the founding of the Institute - we have a real jewel which can be defined as the charismatic manifesto of Mother Seraphina’s Eucharistic spirituality. As the individual and characteristic hallmark of her religious Family, our Venerable Foundress has explicitly stamped an ardent love, a zealous worship, a profound devotion, to the effort of conforming oneself to the Eucharistic Jesus, not only as a Sacrament, but in the totality of the mystery of the Eucharist as a sacrifice

¹³⁸ *Regulations for Postulants and Novices Fasc. XXIV, p.5*

¹³⁹ 08.06.1898: Circular Letter 4

7.2: Devotion to the Sacred Heart

“The Institution of the Eucharist is the fruit of Love; the Sacred Heart is the seat and symbol of Love, from which is reproduced the wonder of a God made Prisoner and food for souls. All that Jesus has done for the benefit of the enslaved, wretched, lost humankind has its origin in the Heart of Jesus. But the Eucharist is the fusion, the compendium of all the wonders....

*The Church has placed the Feast of the Sacred Heart as a seal to the Solemnity of Corpus Christi to show that **the Eucharist has its culmination in the Sacred Heart.** The Heart of Jesus in the Eucharist! Behold the culmination of your heart! Your hearts must be pinned there; there you must fix your abode: there you must close yourselves forever and learn how to love.”¹⁴⁰*

The devotion to the Sacred Heart, is taken in its typical expiatory dimension: to make reparation for the growing infidelity to and offences against Christ: negligences and omissions by the religious, the tepidity and ingratitude of men and women towards the Blessed Sacrament, the rare reception of the Sacrament, the rising Masonic and anti-ecclesiastical spirit of the times etc.

“Here I am O Jesus, poor as ever at the close of the month consecrated to your Heart! Utterly poor in every single virtue! Fill me with your goodness as I cast everything of mine— both good and bad – into your Heart so that I may be purified and renewed. Amen.”¹⁴¹

8: The Mission of the CFMSS: Being Witnesses of the Eucharist

“Go, Carry and Set everyone on fire with the love of the Eucharistic Lord!”

*“Oh, what a terrible ache to be on fire with a passion to do a lot of things, and yet unable to accomplish it! My spirit yearns to race off, but it is held a prisoner in my frail body. O God, give me health, give me a lot of souls because my heart is burning with a raging thirst for them... O Immaculate Virgin, for the love of your Son grant me the grace to purify my past and to consecrate the rest of my life as an act of reparation in order to sanctify me and **lead myriads of souls to the heart of Jesus**, without ever being daunted by hardships or difficulties. Love, Work, Souls is the catchphrase on my banner.”¹⁴²*

Being Eucharistic women encompasses every aspect of our life and mission. Living a “Eucharistic life” means to have the Eucharist alive and well-integrated into the basic realities of our life and mission. Every Eucharistic person is to be committed to participating fully in the mission of Jesus, in building a just society marked by the Kingdom values - of compassion, caring and sharing.

¹⁴⁰Practical Guide, Ch XII

¹⁴¹30.07.1891: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXX, p 20

¹⁴²1890: *Memoirs*: Fasc. XXX, p.3

At the end of every Eucharistic Liturgy, the congregation is dismissed with the words: *“Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.”* Therefore, we **CFMSS should be women who have met God and are sent by God.** Each day he calls out to each of us to be his close companions, to march on a world that has to a large degree forgotten God, that has forgotten how to love. We should feel we are sent into the world to carry his tender, merciful, compassionate love to all, especially to those who have not heard of Christ the Saviour. My life is to be a gift of God for others. Partaking in the Eucharist means going out of myself, breaking the bread of my life, sharing my life freely and joyfully, especially with the neediest ones.

*“He has chosen you among a thousand, not only to dwell in his house, but also to be his collaborators in his apostolate.”*¹⁴³

“Those who have come into genuine contact with Christ cannot keep him for themselves, they must proclaim him.”¹⁴⁴ The **mission is always preceded by a personal encounter with Jesus**, which leads us to conversion – an indispensable attitude for being conformed to Christ. As one becomes more and more aware of belonging to Christ, the resulting gratitude and inner joy gather momentum to communicate to others the gift of meeting with Jesus: to make visible His loving and saving presence.

The more we are rooted in the experience of God flowing from a living faith, the more credibly we shall be able to proclaim Christ to the world and further God’s Kingdom. As CFMSS we are bound to contemplate Jesus present in the Eucharist with the living faith of the apostles who saw Him with their own eyes, touched Him with their own hands and shared with Him their problems, especially their mission experiences.

As a result of the radical changes brought about by his foundational experience of the Risen Lord, Paul is convinced of his vocation to preach the Gospel (Rom: 1:16). He understood his mission as a duty, as a spontaneous response to God’s never failing love. The Samaritan woman’s meeting with Jesus opens her to a vital, profound, liberating experience, which spurred her to proclaim her discovery to others. She became an effective missionary among her people, because she had a deep experience of Jesus. Mary Magdalene’s meeting with the Risen Lord¹⁴⁵ is turned into proclamation. She cannot keep to herself what she has seen and experienced, “I have seen the Lord.” (Jn 20:18)

*I am convinced that the apostolate of a contemplative person bears copious fruits, while that of a merely active person is ineffective.....In short, **our life and activities should spring from intimate union with our Divine Spouse in the Eucharist**”*¹⁴⁶

The more one is united to the Lord, the more fruitful will be her missionary life. According to the invitation of Mother Seraphina to make of our “hearts a living tabernacle”¹⁴⁷ in order to carry the Mysteries to men and women, is to communicate the fruit

¹⁴³ 20.3.1903: Let. to the Indian Missionaries, Let 597, FASC. XII

¹⁴⁴NMI. 40

¹⁴⁵ cf. Jn. 20: 11-18

¹⁴⁶First Draft of the Constitutions, Ch.I

¹⁴⁷ 04.02.1902: Mother Seraphina’s let. to Sr. Agatha, Let. 517 Fasc. X-XI

of one's contemplation, or experience of God's love and mercy to all those with whom we interact in day-to-day life. Since mission means "being sent", the **one who is sent has to remain in contact with the "source of her mission"**, like Jesus who remained always in the heart of the Father while he was "on mission". Being in prayer is an attitude of continuous and humble adoration of God's mysterious presence in people, events and things: an interior fount of peace that a person brings to every sphere of life and apostolate.

*"Missionary activity is a sublime yet arduous undertaking. **Only through prayer can one obtain the requisites for being a true missionary.** Hence let us pray, and pray with faith and humility."*¹⁴⁸

It is in authentic prayer that we receive the enlightenment to explore new ways to apply the Gospel in our daily situation. *"The saints constantly renewed their capacity for love of neighbour from their encounter with the Eucharistic Lord, and conversely their encounter acquired its realism and depth in their service to others."*¹⁴⁹

According to Pope Benedict XVI, whoever participates in the Eucharist must lovingly communicate the self-gifting of Christ. He/she is bound to live in this very same charity, to love others, to witness to God's love to the point of gifting oneself, even to martyrdom. "The more ardent the love of the Eucharist in the hearts of the Christian people, the more clearly will they recognize the goal of all mission: to bring Christ to others."¹⁵⁰

*'Since the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is a powerful means for the efficacy of the apostolate in foreign nations, let the sisters practise this devotion at the mission centres.'*¹⁵¹

Our active life is to be sustained by the flame ignited in the contemplation of the Eucharistic Lord. Having met the Lord at the Eucharistic table, we go out to meet him in the "new poor": the migrant workers, the displaced, the refugees driven out of their ancestral land, the victims of violence of all sorts – sexual abuse, communal clashes, human traffic, child labour, pornography and the like, the unemployed, the old folks left to fend for themselves et al. Like Jesus, we have to bear in our hearts and in our prayer the needs of these victims of the "throw-away" culture¹⁵² and intercede for them.

Our vocation is to be people for the other, especially the least ones in the society. We, as consecrated women, testify to the world that our passionate love of Jesus impels us to live a joyful life of total self-gift, sharing all we have in compassionate concern so that all may have life to the full. We are to stand at the threshold between God and the people (Joel 2:17) and lift our arms in prayer like Moses (Ex.17: 11) and intercede for them as Mary did at the wedding in Cana.

"You are like those who brought the paralytic to the Lord for healing. Through your prayer, night and day, you bring before God the lives of so many of our brothers and sisters who for various reasons cannot come to him to experience his healing mercy,

¹⁴⁸ 16.11.1902: Cir. Let. 12

¹⁴⁹ Pope Benedict XVI: *Deus Caritas Est*: n. 18

¹⁵⁰ *Sacramentum Caritatis* 86

¹⁵¹ 1904-95: Second Draft of the Constitutions, Art. 12

¹⁵² EG 53

even as he patiently waits for them. By your prayers, you can heal the wounds of many.”¹⁵³

Reflection:-

- ♥ Is our consecrated life a faithful fusion of divine communion and human commitment?
- ♥ Has my encounter with God in prayer brought me a new heart capable of loving to the full? Has it purified my eyes to perceive hidden needs? Has it drawn me nearer to human weakness and suffering in specific acts?

8.1: Mary: the Icon of the Eucharistic woman

*"We find Mary with Jesus in the little house at Nazareth, in the grotto of Bethlehem, from Bethlehem to Calvary, from Calvary to the cenacle. Our redemption begins at Nazareth; it is completed at Calvary and diffuses from the cenacle. **What a beautiful intertwining of the Mysteries with Mary!** But above all, let us consider her on Calvary where the Mother becomes the priestess and sacrifices the great Victim. It was precisely then that she became the co-redemptrix of humankind and we became the redeemed people for her. It was then that her maternal heart was enlarged and she embraced the whole human family."*¹⁵⁴

Mother Seraphina chooses the Virgin Mary— the transparent icon of the Eucharistic woman, wholly permeated by the Mysteries of Christ, especially in the Mystery of the Incarnation of the Word and at the foot of the Cross - as the model for herself and her daughters in living the Eucharistic –Missionary Charism. Along with her Son Mary shares and lives the Mysteries. Under the cross, she experienced her motherhood even more profoundly. Mary is alone at the mystery of Incarnation; on Calvary she is with John the beloved disciple; and in the Cenacle amidst the Apostles: the “Virgin-made-Church”¹⁵⁵. As "women of the Eucharist" called to live totally all these dimensions, the CFMSS must learn from the Virgin Mary to live our baptismal priesthood and our motherhood in the Church.

“Mary has anticipated in the mystery of Incarnation, the Church’s Eucharistic faith. When, at the Visitation, she bore in her womb the Word made flesh, she became the first “tabernacle” in history...Throughout her life at Christ’s side and not only on Cavalry, Mary had made her own the sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist...In her daily preparation for Cavalry, Mary experienced a kind of ‘anticipated Eucharist’ - one might say a ‘spiritual communion’ of desire and oblation, which would culminate in her union with her Son in his passion, and then find expression after Easter by her partaking in the Eucharist which the Apostles celebrated as the memorial of that passion...Experiencing the memorial of Christ’s death in the Eucharist also means continually receiving this gift...It means taking on a commitment to be conformed to Christ, **putting ourselves at the school of his mother and allowing her to**

¹⁵³VDQ, n. 16

¹⁵⁴Practical Guide, XII

¹⁵⁵ St. Francis: Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary: 1

accompany us. With the Church and as the Mother of the Church, Mary is present at each of our celebrations of the Eucharist. If the Church and the Eucharist are inseparably united, the same ought to be said of Mary and the Eucharist”¹⁵⁶

At the Annunciation Mary received the Word of God in faith and humility. As she became the mother of Jesus bowing down to God’s will, we too can conceive the Word obeying the will of the Father (Mt. 12:50), and become the “mother-sister-spouse of Christ.”¹⁵⁷ Mary has set us an example of being a sensitive person, reaching out to the needy (Lk.1: 39), perceptive of the neediness of others (Jn 2:3). Carrying Jesus within - carrying the Eucharistic love to all - enables us to go out of ourselves, to get out of our personal world in order to venture out to new places, among new people, meeting new culture. Mary teaches us to be **Eucharistic women who dare to break the bread of our lives** so that our world may vibrate with a spirituality of communion, reconciliation, and a sense of solidarity, that places those on the margins of our society at the center of our concern, that all may have bread, dignity and fullness of life.

It is in our emptiness, smallness and helplessness that the Eucharistic miracle happens! If we allow compassion to move us to action and surrender whatever we have – however little it may be, for the common good, great miracles will happen. “Keeping in mind the Multiplication of the Loaves (Mt. 14:13-21), we need to realize that Christ continues today to exhort his disciples to become personally engaged: “You yourself, give them something to eat.” Jesus wants to elicit an initiative from us even in moment of helplessness. Each of us is truly called, together with Jesus, to be bread broken for the life of the world.”¹⁵⁸ The miracle happens in the giving and in the sharing. The miracle is that as they continue to give what they have, they never run short of the bread and the fish in their basket! Eucharist consists in giving thanks, breaking and sharing. Miracles will continue through men and women of the Eucharist as long as there is compassion, sharing and faith! We must be convinced that the Eucharist brings healing to emotionally hurt individuals, broken families and fragmented societies. It reveals the face of Christ to persons who never had an encounter with Jesus. **“Jesus wants us to touch human misery, to touch the suffering flesh of others...., to enter into the reality of other people’s lives and know the power of tenderness.”**¹⁵⁹

To be a missionary implies that we give a warm welcome to those people who are suffering from discrimination in society, the physically challenged, people with special needs like the elderly, the economically marginalized, and the socially deprived for any reason: such were the followers of Jesus. Christian love is incompatible with the exclusion of persons. Therefore, no one is to be excluded from our love. What Pope Francis writes to the contemplative nuns, is applicable to the CFMSS too:

“...you may become a living continuation of the mystery of Mary, Virgin, Bride and Mother, who welcomes and treasures the Word in order to give it back to the world. Thus you will help to bring Christ to birth and increase in the hearts of men and women, who often unconsciously, are thirsting for the One who is the ‘way, the truth and the life’. Like Mary, you too **strive to be a ‘stairway’ by which God descends**

¹⁵⁶ EE 55-57

¹⁵⁷ 1st Let. Agnes: 24/ Let. Faithful: 50

¹⁵⁸ Sac. Car, 88

¹⁵⁹ EG 270

to encounter humanity, and humanity ascends to encounter God and to contemplate His face in the face of Christ.”¹⁶⁰

Reflection

- ♥ How does my devotion to Mary help me lead my life in complete submission to God’s will and total availability?
- ♥ Am I attentive to Mary’s injunction, “*Do what He tells you*” in my day-to-day life?

8. 2: Witnesses of the Eucharist to the World

*“Let the name, Clarist Franciscan Missionaries of the Blessed Sacrament, make the sisters understand that they have a special vocation to preach with their lives the Eucharistic Jesus and the Immaculate Virgin, to propagate their names, veneration and glory. In order to succeed in it, let them strive to imbibe the spirit of the Seraphic Founders Francis and Clare, and their love for the Eucharist and the Virgin – the legacy they have bequeathed to us.”*¹⁶¹

The world today expects from us consecrated persons **the testimony of an authentic interior life**, integrated and unifying. “The first and fundamental mission that we receive from the sacred Mysteries we celebrate is that of bearing witness to his love by our lives: through our actions, words and way of living.”¹⁶² People do not look for dogmas or doctrines but God-experienced people. “What we have seen, heard, touched with our own hands,” (1 Jn 1:3) convinces the people. In fact, Seraphina exclaims: *“what is a missionary without union with God, which is developed through prayer?”*¹⁶³

We must realize that we are engaged in a spiritual battle and the primary weapon of that battle is prayer. Only such Religious can face today’s world with a prophet’s courage and a mystic’s compassion. We may not be able to confront those who create hunger and misery, but we cannot reject or hate them, but rather **call them to conversion first and foremost through our prayer and penance; if possible through words and actions**. Only a life of ever deepening and faithful contemplation of the Eucharist can keep us CFMSS attuned to the dream of a suffering God for humanity and the earth.

*“O Jesus, I burn with zeal for the salvation of souls. Would that everyone praised you, blessed you, loved you in time and in eternity, forever and forever.”*¹⁶⁴

“More than in external works, the mission” of the consecrated persons “consists in making Christ present to the world through personal witness”.¹⁶⁵ The mission of a religious begins with the testimony of her life presenting Jesus to the world first and foremost by her

¹⁶⁰VDQ: n. 37

¹⁶¹1904-05: Second Draft of the Constitution, Art. 8, Fasc. XXVIII

¹⁶²cf. *Sacr. Caritatis* 85

¹⁶³*Practical Guide*, Ch. X XIX, Fasc. XXV

¹⁶⁴30.08.1883; *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXIX, p.5

¹⁶⁵ VC. 72

personal witness. “The **best form of witness is the very life of the missionary**. In many cases it is the only possible way of being a missionary. People today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers, in experience than in teaching, and in life and action than in theories”¹⁶⁶

Francis admonished the preachers to “first draw from secret prayers what they would later pour out in holy sermons”; and to first “grow warm within before they spoke frozen words outside.”¹⁶⁷ If a preacher does not take time to hear God’s word with an open heart, if he does not allow it to touch his life, then he will indeed be a false prophet Christ’s message must penetrate and possess the preacher, not just intellectually and in his entire being.¹⁶⁸

When Francis goes/sends his friars out on a mission, contemplation remains the indispensable task.

“Although you are travelling, your conduct must be as if you were in a hermitage or in your cell. Wherever we are, wherever we go, we bring our cell with us. Our brother body is our cell and our soul is the hermit living in that cell in order to pray to God and meditate. If our soul does not live in peace and solitude within its cell, of what avail is to live in a man-made cell?”¹⁶⁹

While sending out his friars to live among the Muslims and non-believers, Francis instructs them how to preach Christ to them: firstly, by the witness of a Christian life and secondly, to proclaim the Word of God “when they see it pleases the Lord.”¹⁷⁰

According to Seraphina:

*“To go to the mission one has to receive a special call from God. Whoever is inspired by God should have the spirit of sacrifice and be ready and willing to give her life to the point of shedding her blood for Christ. She should be aglow with apostolic zeal and the flame of charity, **eager for nothing but the jexpansion of God’s kingdom** and of having the sweetest name of Jesus honoured in every corner of the world.”¹⁷¹*

Our consecrated life, in fact, is to be nurtured by growth in prayer life and continued conversion of heart. Like the pioneer missionaries we should strive to be holy persons, bearing eloquent witness to the primacy of God in our everyday lives, and imbued with Christ’s love for every person. The more we live in Christ, the better we can serve Him in others, going even to the furthest missionary outpost and facing greatest dangers.

The more the CFMSS are rooted in the experience of God flowing from a living faith, the more credibly we shall be able to proclaim Christ to the world and further God’s Kingdom. We must try to discover a new meaning in our life through deeper intimacy with the Eucharistic Jesus so that as transformed persons, we are able to infuse a meaning to the life of men and women who are wandering like a flock more in need of inspiring, committed

¹⁶⁶ St. Pope John Paul II: *Ecclesia in Asia*, n. 42

¹⁶⁷ 2 Cel. 163

¹⁶⁸ Cf. EG. 151

¹⁶⁹ LP 80

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Rnb. XVI: 5 -7

¹⁷¹ December 1900 – May 1901: *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXIX, Fasc. XXV

shepherds than of pastures. “The world and the Church need you to be beacons of light for the journey of the men and women of our time. This should be your prophetic witness.”¹⁷²

*“If I have to spare time for those in need - even setting aside my devotions if called for, to visit and console the ailing – whether physically or spiritually, I would be leaving Jesus for his sake. However, experience has taught me that if I cut short or postpone the conversation with any person in particular, he/she will go on with equal ardour O Jesus, **I’m afire with zeal for the glory of your Church and the salvation of the whole world!**”¹⁷³*

So writes Seraphina, once when caught in a dilemma of wanting to help the troubled youth in their hour of need and the duty of being present at the common acts of devotion.

Reflection:-

- ♥ The rule of service is: “Christ did not please himself”. In serving others, **do I seek my own interest, or that of others?**
 - Do I make an idol of my rest, my free time, my schedule?
 - Am I ready to give up a “prestigious” service for a humble unappreciated one?

- ♥ How can I add value and meaning to my life of service and enhance and enrich others, especially the beneficiaries of my service?

8. 3: Living a Eucharist-centered, Mission-oriented Life

“Let the Clarist Franciscan Missionaries of the Blessed Sacrament, after the example of the Immaculate Virgin, embrace the active-contemplative life seeking in prayer blessing for their apostolate and the goal of prayer in their apostolate: to intertwine marvelously the contemplative and active life in such a way that the latter is not deprived of the sweetness of the former, which accompanies and brings to perfection every act of the latter.”¹⁷⁴

To live a Eucharistic-centered life and to be a missionary are the twin dimensions of the charism of the CFMSS. If we open our eyes during the Eucharist, like the disciples whose eyes were opened in the breaking of the bread at Emmaus, we shall be able to see the Lord in the unexpected, in the new presence. Then shall we be able to creatively apply new ways and methods capable of tuning into the new issues confronting today’s men and women, the refugees, the emigrants, the outcasts et al.

As Eucharistic Missionaries, our mission is **not centered on our own interest, but on the welfare of the people** we are sent out to serve. We must be where the cry of the poor meets the ear of God. Our religious vocation is **not to be professionals but prophetic missionaries** committed to a cause. We, in fact, are called to move out of our well-ordered, “insulated” life to the pangs and struggles and helplessness of the common man, to challenge the social barriers that alienate and divide. We are sent to enter deeply into the

¹⁷² VDQ: n. 36

¹⁷³ *Memoirs*: 1881-1890, Fasc. XXIX, p.20

¹⁷⁴ 1904-05: Second Draft of the Constitution, Art. 9, Fasc. 27

dynamics of our culture in which so many people are victimized in a staggering variety of ways.

We must remember that “We are ambassadors of Christ” (2 Cor 5:18 -20). It is our vocation to build bridges, heal wounds, remove ethnic and racial prejudices, and work for the prevention of war. Ours is to discourage the rampant culture of consumerism, instant gratification, senseless waste, and a life of superficiality. We are called to build a responsible civil society in this unjust world, which will stand for the dignity of the individual, rights of the human persons, of minorities, care of the aged and ailing, freedom of religion and communal harmony.

The response to our call demands that we follow the dynamics of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10: 29-37) which urges us to be neighbourly, especially to those who suffer and to create an inclusive society, following the ways of Jesus who ate with the publicans and the sinners, welcomed the least ones and the children, healed the lepers, pardoned and freed the sinful woman, talked to the Samaritan woman et al. For Jesus the whole human person was important, much more valuable than any established law.

*“With the consent of the Holy See, the Clarist Franciscan Missionaries of the Most Blessed Sacrament shall establish themselves in foreign missions, **preferably among the most neglected, the remotest and the riskiest.** There they shall carry out all the activities befitting their religious state and according to the specific needs of the mission”.*¹⁷⁵

Believing in the transforming power of the Eucharist, allowing ourselves to be moved by the love of the Father for the world, make us capable of recognizing and welcoming the active presence of the Risen Christ and the Holy Spirit in the seemingly hopeless situations. The tragedy of hunger and diseases that plague the developing/ underdeveloped countries, the hardships faced by the victims of ethnic clashes, strife and violence especially at the hands of the ISIS, the struggles of the immigrants – these are evils that call for our urgent attention. Writing to Agnes of Prague, St. Clare underscores the mission of her daughters:

“I consider you a co-worker of God Himself... and a support of the weak members of his ineffable Body.”¹⁷⁶

All consecrated persons are called to be pioneers and prophets who are sensitive to the needs of the time, who break new ground, crossing borders, going where others do not dare to go. We are not meant to be “settlers” who are happy just continuing the good deeds of the past, protecting the heritage, and rejoicing in the blessings of the day. As Eucharistic women we are called to let go of the comfortable and familiar ways, be alive and sensitive to the emerging situations and needs of our people, and move into a future not according to our plans, but according to the plans God has for us. As Missionaries of the Blessed Sacrament, we have to bring the **transcendental energy acquired during God-encounter** into the world of human needs to be productive in our apostolate.

*"I have dedicated everything for the good of the youth, the orphans, the daughters of the common people, for the mission in foreign lands. **I wish to wipe away every drop of tear, alleviate every pain.** Would that I could comfort all the widows and the broken-*

¹⁷⁵1904-1905: The Second Draft of the Constitution, Ch. I, Art. 6,

Fasc. XXVII

¹⁷⁶3rd Let. Agnes: 8

*hearted! ... I tell you in all simplicity that it seems as if all the misery in the world were gathered in my heart and I am at a loss how to help them without any discrimination of race or status."*¹⁷⁷

All types of ministries in which the religious are engaged are concrete expressions of the service expressed in the commitment which takes care of even the details of small things. For a consecrated person anything big or small becomes an expression of loving kindness in favour of all with no distinction and discrimination. "God is able to act in every situation, even amid apparent setbacks.... We may be sure that no single act of love for God will be lost, no generous effort is meaningless, no painful endurance is wasted. All of these encircle the world like a vital force."¹⁷⁸ The CFMSS when they are Eucharistic in their lives, by living the values of the Eucharist radically become authentic missionaries. If the Eucharist contains the power for the transformation of the world by creating the values of presence, memorial, sacrifice and service, the consecrated life contains the power to change the world in the same way through the witness to authentic being, rootedness in God tradition, selflessness and service through breaking of one's life.

*"Oh, how pleasant it is to dwell in the open wound of the Sacred Heart and to have the divine blood sprinkled on the girls entrusted to us, on all the sinners and on all men so that all could be led to the sweet heart of Jesus".*¹⁷⁹

As the sense of sin diminishes in human hearts, society needs persons who can revive the sense of Gospel values, build the sense of self-worth in shattered individuals, and hold out hope to people on the path to despair. Therefore, the CFMSS are called to become the "lambs of God" who take away the anger and angst of the world, urging civic authorities and business tycoons to place human concerns before commercial interests.

Reflection:-

- ♣ How do I help those people experiencing forms of violence, discrimination on account of their faith/ race/ social status/ ethnic background?
- ♣ Are we comfort seeking communities? Do our lives reflect that we are ready to move out of our comfort zones of stability and security into newer and deeper commitment so that we can set free the victims of the "slavery" of the contemporary world?
- ♣ How can the ministries we engage in become concrete expressions of our love for the Eucharistic Lord?
- ♣ What new "presence" and new methods can we adopt in our mission among the "existential peripheries" of our human society?
- ♣ How far do we CFMSS play the role of pioneers/prophets in our missionary ventures?

¹⁷⁷ 21.03.1906: let to Count Camillo, Fasc. XLVIII

¹⁷⁸EG 279

¹⁷⁹ 23.06.1890: *Exhortation to the teaching Sisters*, Fasc. XX

8. 4: *Willingness to lay down one's life*

“We shall be happy if we are allowed to wipe a single teardrop – ready as we are to lay down our life to mitigate the pain and suffering of others.”¹⁸⁰

Besides the spirit of sacrifice and a burning zeal for diffusing God's Kingdom, each CFMSS is to be ready and “*willing to give her life to the point of shedding her blood for Christ*”¹⁸¹. The nucleus of the saving mission of consecrated life consists in giving life to others by dying to self. Our mission is not where there are fewer problems and more opportunities, but **where there are more risks**. Our mission is a movement towards the unknown; there may be initial failures but led by the Spirit we will find a lot of possibilities for creative and innovative evangelizing activity. We need resolute conviction of our missionary call in this era of rising persecution and fundamentalism. In the midst of hostility, persecution, and even brutal murder we should be ready for the supreme test of giving up our own life.

*“The martyrs have promoted our religion and you should foster the Indian mission with your suffering”.*¹⁸²

The martyrs have always been a seed of life. In the midst of hostility and persecution and even brutal murder that we face now in India as well as at the hands of the ISIS in various parts of the Middle East and the Boko Haram in Nigeria, we should be ready for the supreme test of giving up our own life. In our world, where it often seems that the signs of God's presence have been lost from sight, our convincing prophetic witness is increasingly necessary. The unavoidable suffering lovingly endured in union with Jesus will bring about salvation for oneself and the others. A rich harvest is gathered out of the grain that breaks itself to bring forth new life (Jn. 12:24). We shouldn't forget the **inherent martyrdom involved in spreading God's Reign**: in bringing compassion to the downtrodden, in fighting for equality and justice wherever human dignity and rights are violated, in bringing peace and harmony among people seething with anger and hatred against one another, in sowing seeds of goodness amidst communal violence.

“A true missionary... knows that Jesus walks with him, speaks to him, breathes with him, and works with him. He sense Jesus alive with him in the midst of the missionary enterprise.”¹⁸³

A CFMSS today is to be a PRESENCE: available, solicitous, sympathetic – a witness of God's love and tenderness participating in Christ's mission carrying forward Seraphina's mandate to “*Go, enkindle and carry the love of the Eucharistic Jesus to all*”.

Reflection;-

¹⁸⁰ 16.01. 1915. Let. to Pope Benedict XV

¹⁸¹ *Practical Guide* XXIX

¹⁸² 11.06.1909: Letter to Sr. Cecilia, Letter 916, Fasc. XV

¹⁸³ EG 266

- ♥ What is my attitude towards suffering, especially unjust one? Do acts of self-denial/renunciation find a place in my life as CFMSS?
- ♥ Am I ready to be “wounded” for the sake of my brothers/sisters? Willing to lay down my life for the sinners/enemies/ungodly? (Rom 5: 5 - 6)
- ♥ What light, strength, enlightenment, vision, motivation or creativity can we offer to the post-modern, materialistic, irreligious people, especially to the impoverished thirsting for inner peace?
- ♥ Does our Eucharistic living make a difference in the lives of the hungry and the homeless, trafficked women, victims of violence, child labour, migration, religious fundamentalism and other expressions of injustice and oppression that confront our society today?

Conclusion

For Mother Seraphina the Eucharist was the food that nourished her, the consecrated Host adored in the monstrance was her light which flooded her soul and shone upon her mind, especially in times of darkness and doubts. The Eucharistic Lord was her strength whom she consulted often daily in moments of crisis: when choosing a locale for a mission, in opening/closing a house during the First World War, or in venturing into new apostolate, besides educational activities. The inspiration she received from the tabernacle was the decisive factor in accepting God’s will in her life: from joining Forli to breaking with her earlier religious family, from undergoing a period of traumatic experience to founding a new religious congregation, in the formation of her sisters, in undertaking foreign missions in India and Brazil, and above all, in continuing to send sisters to India against all odds when the Indian Mission was almost tottering.

Undoubtedly Seraphina had a solid and well defined interior attitude strongly characterized by Eucharistic devotion, as proved by her *Method of Life* drafted in 1881 and updated time and again in the light of the “discovery” that the various spiritual experiences revealed to her, and finally polished and perfected for all the sisters in “*The Practical Guide to Our Sanctification.*”

Seraphina exhorts us to break loose from our “routine practice” of participating in the Eucharistic celebration as if it were an ordinary event, to live each liturgical moment of the Mass and to gain the best benefits from the Eucharist so that our life may produce the finest fruits. The grace we receive in the Eucharist should bear fruits of conversion in us and fruits of charity toward our brothers and sisters. A life that does not experience ongoing conversion of heart and mind cannot bear true fruits for the Lord. In her writings, Seraphina warns us against the routine attendance at Mass which makes us so lukewarm that we do not experience any change in our life. “*How is it, my daughters, that after so many Holy*

*Communion we are ever the same today as we were yesterday? Can one bask in the sunshine without feeling its warmth, or seeing its light?"*¹⁸⁴

She bemoans our superficial reception of Christ in Holy Communion: receiving him without any spiritual preparation, encountering Him out of habit, because we do not know how to appreciate His greatest gift and have lost our awe of each encounter with Him. She urges to relive the amazement of one's daily encounter with Love, to live the greatest Miracle with one's heart, to spend the post-Communion interceding for the conversion of sinners, for peace in the world, for our families, our neighbours, for those who ask for our prayers, for souls in Purgatory, for those who do not believe, or adore Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

"Immolation, expiation, sacrifice", "penance, prayer, apostolate" – these are the banners that Seraphina holds up as the paradigm for her sisters: "*O Jesus, teach your spouses the value, the essence, the advantage of making true immolation!*"¹⁸⁵ Our daily life has to be a sacrifice acceptable to God, offering Him our pains and hopes, sadness and joys, worries and problems, temptations and frustrations, failures and success. The offering which most pleases the Lord is when we offer ourselves as a holocaust in union with the Immolated Lamb on the altar:

*"Our life in common is itself is a continuous martyrdom. It calls for sacrifice at every moment, a pleasant sacrifice for the CFMSS who yearn to make continuous reparation in union with the Eucharistic Jesus. But what is to be atoned for? Make reparation for our own infidelities, those of the whole world, expiate in a particular way, the outrages against Jesus present on every altar."*¹⁸⁶

In calling her Religious Family CFMSS, Seraphina reminds them that they should always be bearers of the Eucharistic flame, daily offering themselves as victims along with the Eucharistic Victim for the salvation of the world. She wants her daughters to find in the Sacrament of Love the solitude to commune with Emmanuel dwelling in the tabernacle, the rest they need to carry out their daily task, the serenity to accompany their mission. In short, each sister is to be a:

Clarist- a "co-worker of God" sharing in the re-creating act of the Father, the redemptive love of the Son and the sanctifying work of the Spirit by her life of immolation rooted in the contemplation of the Eucharist and intercessory prayer.

Franciscan- building God's Reign by a penitential life of self-denial, self-sacrifice, acts of penance and expiation aimed at one's conversion of heart and mind, leading to the renewal of the world at large.

Missionary- burning with passionate love for God and having the audacity to move to unknown territories and unexplored ventures to proclaim the Good news by the video-credibility of one's life upholding the primacy of prayer.

Of the most Blessed Sacrament – a witness to the transforming power of the Eucharist:

¹⁸⁴ *Practical Guide* Ch. IV

¹⁸⁵ 1896-97: *Secret of my Sanctification III 4-5*

¹⁸⁶ 1896 – 97: *Secret of my Sanctification IV:5*

daily being moulded by the Eucharist into his image and drawing strength from it to “Carry the Mysteries”, to go forth and set every heart on fire with the Eucharistic flame.