

**General Chapter 2015**  
**Closing Eucharistic Celebration**  
**June 6, 2015 – Homily**

*Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala (Jn 19: 25-27).*

*Friars and lesser ones in our times.* This, my brothers, has been the guiding theme of our General Chapter. It has found expression through our liturgical celebrations, our group discussions, our evening socials and songfests, and in the simple sharing of the story of our lives with one another at meals and at other moments where we have taken time to listen to and share.

At the same time, this theme also has haunted us, not allowing us to get comfortable with the current state of affairs in the life of the Order, the Church, the world, or of our personal lives. We have struggled to formulate proposals capable of expressing our restlessness before the immense challenge of the Gospel life that we have embraced *unconditionally*. We have found ourselves struggling to understand a wounded humanity and a threatened natural environment – the ‘substance’ of ‘nostra aetate’ - that are crying out for our love and full attention. This woundedness is coming not only from outside of the Order but also from within because we recognize that we have broken trust with one another, a trust that must be rebuilt through daily acts of doing justice, living transparent lives, offering and seeking forgiveness, mercy and reconciliation, and walking humbly with our God (Micah 6:8).

The Gospel of John that we have heard proclaimed reveals the nature of authentic discipleship in Jesus Christ. It also reveals the way for us to live fully our evangelical commitment to the ‘life and rule’, which is the Gospel. We like Jesus’ mother and his mother’s sisters are called to stand with Jesus and with humanity and the created universe in at all times, and most especially in moments of suffering, dehumanization, and death. This ‘standing’ is not a passive act carried out by guilty bystanders. It is a prophetic activity, as our *Lineamenta* reminds us, because it reveals to us “new paths..., new models of acting, new forms of communal life and mission” that we are called to undertake in order that our life and lifestyle might constitute “a living memorial of Jesus’ way of living and acting...”

Mary, the mother of Jesus, the other women, and the disciple whom Jesus loved who were standing at the foot of the cross recognized that by remembering Jesus' way of living and acting they were participating in an act of spiritual and disruption: the tyranny of the present status quo in their lives and in ours is defeated by the power of Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection. This is revealed most dramatically in Mary's *Magnificat!* The freedom we now enjoy enables us to summon up the courage to embrace one another and to embrace all of humanity as authentic brothers. This same freedom is renewed and deepened each time we reach out in love, mercy and hope to our brothers in the Order, to the blind and the beggar we meet along the road, to those who hold visions of God and the world different from our own, and to our wounded environment. By living as authentic men of faith we become brothers and lesser ones, companions with Jesus, Mary his mother, and with one another, journeying together on the road towards the Kingdom.

As we celebrate in this sacred place of St. Mary of the Angels, we call upon Mary the mother of Jesus, a Jewish woman and pilgrim of faith, to intercede for us so that we might embrace fully our Gospel identity as itinerant missionaries of hope, dialogue, peace, uncontrollable joy and unconditional love. "Today we look to her and ask her to help us proclaim the message of salvation...(*Evangelii gaudium*, 287).

With Mary, let us pray (Cf. *Evangelii gaudium*, 288):

"Mary, Virgin and Mother, ...help us to say our own 'yes' to the urgent call, as pressing as ever, to proclaim the good news of Jesus (EG, 288)... Obtain for us now a new ardor born of the resurrection, that we may bring to all the Gospel of life, which triumphs over death. Give us a holy courage to seek new paths, that the gift of unfading beauty may reach every man and woman. Star of the new evangelization, help us bear radiant witness to communion, service, ardent and generous faith, justice and love of the poor, that the joy of the Gospel may reach to the ends of the earth, illuminating even the fringes of our world." Amen.