

Letter of the year 2024



With roots in  
the gift received,  
new beginnings,  
new calls

Gregoria Ruiz Alegarbes





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Gregoria Ruiz Alegarbes  
President of the Teresian Association

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## INTRODUCTION

### 1924-2024: The Teresian Association, one hundred years as a work of the Church

What joy and blessing it is to finally mark the centenary when the Church put her seal on the Work of Poveda. And what gratitude and joy fill our hearts to have come this far.

On January 11, 1924, Pope Pius XI, by means of the Brief *Inter frugiferas*, approved in perpetuity the Teresian Association. This Pontifical approval made it possible for the Teresian Association to expand internationally, extending its roots to over thirty countries across the four continents. This one-hundred-year journey in faith has depended on nothing else but God's unfailing grace and abiding providence, and the maternal companionship and protection of Mary. And, along the way, while drawing light and strength from these wellsprings, it contributed to the building of God's kingdom in the heart of the world.

On the day that the Pontifical Approval was received, we remember Josefa Segovia writing to Father Poveda: "I immediately went to the chapel... to tell Jesus that I need to be holy".<sup>1</sup>

And we can imagine the feelings of the faithful and humble Founder of the Association who, upon receiving the news of the first diocesan approval in 1917, declared, "The Work is no longer mine. It belongs to the Church."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Josefa Segovia to Pedro Poveda on 6 January 1924 published in *Cartas*. Madrid, 1970.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. An account given by Josefa Segovia and recorded in a "Ficha de Historia de la Obra". 1 March, 1955.

Throughout the years, many individuals and varied groups have responded to and made their own the ideal proposed by Poveda, *that of a fully human life, perfected by the divine, modeling their lives on that of Jesus –the Son of God made man.*<sup>3</sup> At present, the big Teresian family is comprised of educative communities and students in Teresian schools; Youth Movements and groups; TA Alumni Associations and Movements; collaborators in TA student residences, cultural and social projects; cooperative associations and groups (ACIT), and the TA core group.

The precious legacy received from Father Poveda has borne –and continues to bear– fruits through its evangelizing presence wherever the TA members are, carrying out the mission –being in the world but not of the world–, and living as salt, leaven and light.

## **PART I: TO LOOK WITHIN – GRATITUDE AND REMEMBRANCE**

### **The centenary year, a time of coming home–**

Anniversaries are momentous occasions for homecoming, a return to the beginnings, a remembering. For us, it could mean stepping back and taking a pause on the road's bend. Having travelled far and long, this year is a favorable occasion for us who belong to the Teresian family to revisit together the fledgling years of the association, Father Poveda's first intuitions and ideals for the Work, the "good idea" that set many hearts burning with passion for the Kingdom, the inspirations that gave wings to many dreams, the pangs of birthing and the opportune graces that enabled it to pass-over the pains and be overtaken by joy, the countless sacrifices of the first members who were fired-up by the undeterred enthusiasm for holiness which continues to shine in the lives of many more who came after...

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Pedro Poveda Obras Volumen I. Creí, por esto hablé (CpH) [74], 1915.*

Just like the waves that after rushing as far as they can toward the shore, must return to the deep to recoup new energy and strength to be able to launch themselves again with the freedom of a fresh beginning, we, too, will be benefitted by looking back to our beginnings and re-anchor again our vision, plans and actions on the essential reasons for our being here.

As we travel farther away from the starting point, we can sometimes lose sight of the goal and the reason why we took the journey in the first place. As in a natural family, we strengthen our roots and tighten the anchor of our identity by knowing our family story. Cultures, too, survived through the centuries even without the benefit of modern communication technology by the simple practice of storytelling. By coming together and breaking the bread of the family's history they nourish their young members with pride and honor in their belonging to the family and helping them draw courage from the wells of experience and wisdom of their ancestors. Once we stop telling the story, the spirit dies; stories keep the memory alive. Pope Francis, in his message during the World Day of Grandparents and Elderly (2021) said "Without memory, we cannot construct. Memory is the foundation of life".

And so, this year, I invite you to "come home" and create spaces for storytelling in our communities, in our homes, in our centers and schools; making time to be present to and with one another; recounting to one another the stories of our Association, the dream of our Founder, the life-witness of our members, our struggles and victories in our vocation journey, the faith that gives us reason to hope, and the deep and pure joy of living our life as a mission, and the sense of fulfillment in living for God.

## Drinking from the wellspring of Poveda's Writings

One important dimension of our "looking in" this year is by revisiting the writings of Saint Pedro Poveda for our spiritual nourishment and at the same time to reexamine once again our life in the light of his ideals. Let us savor again and again the meaningful texts that emerged from the abundant fruits of his prayer, discernment, study, contemplation of reality, dialogue and conversations with kindred spirits, and wisdom drawn from his experience and participation in Christ's own passion.

### ❖ Being salt...

The writings of Pedro Poveda abound with guideposts on how Teresian members are to conduct themselves. In this centenary year, his reflection on the text, "You are the salt of the earth"<sup>4</sup> from the Gospel of Saint Matthew is a program of life that I propose we delve into further. These words addressed by Jesus to the apostles are for Poveda a clear reference for the members of the Teresian Association, for they are called to be disciples of Jesus. He draws comparison between the life of apostolate and salt:

*You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but it is thrown out and trampled underfoot (Mt 5:13).*

*...Each of you must be salt of the earth...*

#### **Salt seasons the tasteless**

*...You must work in such a manner, speak in such a way, act always with such good spirit, treat others so pleasantly, bring them such abundant consolation and bring such conviction to their spirits that their entire lives will be seasoned... Dealing with an apostolic person was the beginning of conversion for so many!*

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<sup>4</sup> P. Poveda, *CpH* [157], 1920.

**Salt cauterizes what is corrupt**

*This amiable virtue, characteristic of an apostle, is the best treatment, the smoothest, the one that heals wounds most quickly. This fire of charity, of love of God, purifies whatever it touches... Such gentleness in the exercise of your apostolic zeal will not irritate others, or provoke annoyance... But it must be born in mind that just as salt only produces this effect by destroying itself, you will only heal the sores and wounds of humanity through self-denial, sacrifice, your own martyrdom and self-giving...*

**Salt preserves from corruption**

*There can be no corruption wherever salt accumulates, and neither should it exist wherever a true apostle is to be found. Your words and conversations, your actions, your manners, your ways, your demeanor, your whole being, should be an antidote to corruption.*

*...A spring of true and inexhaustible life should exist in you. This life is the life of Christ, his spirit which must never be extinguished...*

*Your example must be so powerfully strong, thanks to God's grace working in you... Your simplicity and straight-forwardness... You must be so humble... that you smooth the way for anyone to imitate. This is how your example and your words will serve to free those you deal with from corruption.*

**You cease to be salt of the earth...**

*When the supernatural element, the spirit of faith, of zeal... are diluted, mixing in the human element... All the fruitfulness of your apostolate is in Christ, and when you are separated from Christ your work is no longer apostolic...*

## ❖ The Early Christians...

Pedro Poveda turned to the Early Christians as the prototype of the Association; this is one of the fundamental aspects of Poveda's spirituality. The Acts of the Apostles give us a vivid description of how the early followers of Jesus expressed their life as a community of disciples, as people with a common calling to follow Jesus:

“They devoted themselves to the Apostles’ teachings and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42) and “The company of those who believed were of one heart and soul” (Acts 4:32).

In 1920, while writing “What it takes to live an apostolic life”<sup>5</sup> Father Poveda underscored:

*I have told you on many occasions and I repeat that a perfect member of the Teresian Association is but a perfect Christian. Hence my insistence that the lives of the early Christians be fully known, so that you may emulate them with perfection.*

### **They devoted themselves to the teaching of the Apostles**

*...The teaching of the Apostles is light for souls. ...Who stand in need of more light than those who live amid the world's darkness in order to dispel that darkness and to give light to those around them?*

*...If you study and learn the teachings of Christ, and faithfully listen to and receive the doctrine of the Apostles, your enlightened faith and your light will illumine the lives of many.*

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<sup>5</sup> P. Poveda, *CpH* [155], 1920.

### **They remained faithful to the breaking of the bread...**

*...Without this breaking of bread in community, how could they have stood firm amid persecution, flattery, and struggle against evil...*

*The story of your communions is the story of your life. Your victories, your fervor, your zeal is founded in your Eucharistic life.*

### **They remained faithful to the prayers...**

*Prayer, this breath of the soul produces such effects, engenders so much life that is unmistakable. When we examine a person's behavior in difficult circumstances, in moments of anguish and unexpected events, we can also perceive whether he/she is a person of prayer, judging by the solutions he/she gives; courage, fortitude, serenity and good judgement. ...They are the upshot of persevering prayer as practiced by the early Christians who followed the teachings of our Divine Master and those of the Apostles.*

### **❖ Charity...**

Deepening further on the essential qualities of the early Christian community that he wishes his followers to emulate, Father Poveda wrote on August 12, 1929: "Charity, the hallmark of the early Christians":<sup>6</sup>

*Following my purpose of imitating the first Christians and that your life be as similar as possible to that of the primitive Church, let us speak of charity, the virtue that stands out most in those faithful, and which I would like to be one of the distinctive features of the Work.*

*...They were of one heart and one soul... One new thing I say to you, that you love one another. I would never tire of speaking to you about this virtue, since I am truly obsessed by it.*

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<sup>6</sup> *Idem* [310] y [311], 1929.

*If we do not have as a fundamental principle to see Christ in each one and in others, we will not have true charity; we will not become a community as we should be.*

*Work on this; these are fundamental truths, positive values that must be cemented in the school of faith. Only in this way will we learn to esteem and love one another in God and for God and to glorify the Lord.*

The trademark of the early Christian communities was their faithfulness to the teachings of the Apostles, the breaking of the bread, the prayer and charity. In our time, how do we demonstrate – through the dynamics of our personal lives and community realities– our own faithfulness to these values that bound together the early Christian communities?

What characteristics of our associations, groups, communities, centers and families stand out as mirrored by us to those who know us closely? After one hundred years of “being on the road”, do we continue to resemble the kind of members and Association that Poveda dreamed of?

## **PART II: REACHING OUT – SHARING OUR LEGACY**

### **Living the charism in the heart of a fractured world**

We know that the Teresian Association is a Work for difficult times. The world Poveda lived in during the last century was not very different from the kind of world we have. He lived in a period of social upheavals that provoked conflicts, hatred, and violence. In the very heart of these realities he prayed, and from the depth of his experience of God came his response.

As in Father Poveda’s time, we continue to live in a broken world; all around us we see nations ravaged by violence and conflicts, natural disasters and manmade calamities, inequality and injustice,

lies, distortions and falsehood, hopelessness and meaninglessness, poverty of many forms, and the list goes on...

Very concretely, as we begin the year 2024, we ardently hope and pray for peace, yearning for a more humane world where each and every person could live with dignity, in peace and safety; and with communities and nations coexisting peacefully in shared development and collective well-being. Despite the gloomy backdrop of our present realities, we persist in trust, clinging to God's vision for the world as beautifully expressed in the book of the prophet Isaiah 11: 6-9:

*The wolf will live with the lamb,  
the leopard will lie down with the goat,  
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;  
and a little child will lead them.*

*The cow will feed with the bear,  
their young will lie down together,  
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.*

*The infant will play near the cobra's den,  
and the young child will put its hand  
into the viper's nest.*

*They will neither harm nor destroy  
on all my holy mountain,  
for the earth will be filled  
with the knowledge of the Lord,  
as the waters cover the sea.*

As believers in God, and in Jesus who "is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love, who is good to all; who has compassion on all he has made" (Ps 145: 8-9), we ponder how we should situate ourselves in this world filled with divisions, with many barriers, borders and walls that classify us as insiders and outsiders. At the same time, there is within and among us a deep

awareness and longing for **unity** and **peace** born of an intuition that we have more in common than what divides and sets us apart from one another.

### **An association of lay people, response to the signs of the times**

Pondering on the realities of his time Pedro Poveda acted intuitively and an association of the laity, whose purpose is to “to extend the reign of God in the world”, was born. While developing the profile of persons who would be part of the incipient Teresian Association, Father Poveda proposed to his collaborators the ideal of *a fully human life, perfected by the divine*.<sup>7</sup> The model is Jesus –God become man– a sure norm to be holy while being human with true humanism. *Under that appearance of only man, there is God; under an ordinary exterior there must be in you the spirit of God*.<sup>8</sup> From this inspiration, Poveda proposes to his collaborators to be bearers of the spirit of God.

Committed to the evangelizing mission of the Church and the radical following of Jesus, Father Poveda told those who joined him to put Jesus at the center of their lives. They are to be witnesses of Christian life in places where ordinary life revolves –in the family, neighborhoods, workplaces, recreational spaces, etc. In all situations and contexts, they are to share by their way of living the values that are characteristic of spaces and circles where God reigns: *love, joy, peace, fortitude, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control* (Gal 5: 22-23).

In his invitation and convocations, Poveda saw the privileged role of those who were engaged in the task of educating children and the youth. He believed in the power of educators and teachers to mold and influence the young. For this reason, he enjoined them to be

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. P. Poveda, *CpH* [74], 1915.

<sup>8</sup> P. Poveda, *CpH* [65,8], 1912.

bearers of Jesus in the classrooms: “...under an ordinary exterior there must be in you the spirit of God”.

### Outwardly ordinary and inwardly distinctive

*Under that appearance of only man there is God, under an ordinary exterior there must be in you the spirit of God.*<sup>9</sup>

Vatican II affirms that the foundation of the lay apostolate stems from the laity’s union with Christ and herein flows their right and duty to be apostles.<sup>10</sup> The laity is given this special vocation to make the Church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that it can become the salt of the earth. They must aid one another toward greater holiness of life so that the world may be filled with the spirit of Christ and may the more effectively attain its destiny in justice, love and peace.

This is the essence of our vocation, a lay association dedicated to the promotion of human advancement and transformation of society, impelled by our faith in Jesus. Thus, according to Father Poveda, it is imperative for us who belong to the TA family to put Jesus at the center of our lives.

To intensify the spiritual life implies an increase in love of God, Pedro Poveda tells us. And to achieve this, he invites us to put all our efforts in knowing Jesus.

*To intensify the spiritual life is not to vary the Work... it does not imply an increase in pious practices, but an increase in love of God... Let us put all our efforts in knowing Jesus well...*<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>10</sup> Cfr. Second Vatican Council. *Apostolicam Actuositatem. Decree on the apostolate of the laity.* Rome 1965.

<sup>11</sup> P. Poveda, *CpH* [311], 1929.

## Communities that are signs and seeds of the reign of God

*But you are a chosen race... God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people; but now you are God's people (1Pe, 2: 9-10).*

Poveda alludes to this epistle in reference to the Teresian Association, when he writes in 1920:<sup>12</sup>

*...Despite being good, upright and just, you were not a people, an association; you were without common interests, ideals, and aspirations; now indeed you are People of God because He called you...*

It is God who called us, gathered us together; we belong to Him having been incorporated into Him through baptism. We were attracted and drawn by the charism of the Teresian Association and we came. We are the People of God invited to live the faith, in community and in communion, as Teresian Association. People loved by God; a people called together by God, who journey impelled by the Spirit. Being part of a Church on a synodal journey, we are called to be faithful to the living out of the gift received.

Our recent experience of the two important events at the international level, the Teresian Association International Meeting of Member Associations and the 19th General Assembly, points to this truth of our being. For the participants representing the TA realities from the four continents of Africa, America, Asia and Europe, it was a meaningful experience of fraternity and of deep communion in diversity. With realism, honesty and respect, we recognized our diversity, the varied contexts we came from, the different degree of growth and development of the TA in each country, the challenges of diverse views and local experiences, etc., yet the spirit of fraternal

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<sup>12</sup> P. Poveda, *CpH* [154], 1920.

love and the communion that spring from a common vocation to the TA, and the sense of belonging and co-responsibility for its life and mission, was proof of the deep spiritual bond that transcends our differences. This we attribute to the action of the Spirit of God among us and not merely from human goodwill. And this experience we wish to share with you all so that you, too, may partake of this blessing.

The charism, the gift received from the Holy Spirit, becomes apparent and visible in society when mirrored by communities, families and groups who hold the same **interests, ideals, and aspirations**. Our mission, as Poveda puts it, is cooperating in the building of God's Kingdom in history. This is the ideal and aspiration that moves us as a people of God.

➔ **Committed to the challenges of the world, with renewed solidarity**

By affirming the dignity of each human person and by its own preferential option for the poor, the Teresian Association promotes human rights and is committed to building a society of justice and solidarity. Being disciples of Jesus, we heed the call of the Church to recognize people in poverty as protagonists in the Association's journey.

The XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops states that:

*Among the many faces of those in poverty are those who do not have the things they need to lead a dignified life: migrants and refugees; indigenous peoples; those who suffer violence and abuse, in particular women; people struggling with addiction; minorities who are systematically denied a voice; abandoned elderly people; victims of racism, exploitation and trafficking, especially minors; exploited workers; the economically excluded, and others living on the peripheries; the most vulnerable, the unborn and their mothers; the "new poor", produced by wars and terrorism.*

*And alongside forms of material poverty, many also experience spiritual poverty, understood as lacking a sense of life's meaning and purpose.*<sup>13</sup>

➔ **Carers and defenders of the dignity of every person and our common home**

The late Pope Benedict XVI reminded us that “alongside the ecology of nature, there exists what can be called a ‘human’ ecology which in turn demands a ‘social’ ecology. All this means that humanity... must be increasingly conscious of the links between natural ecology, or respect for nature, and human ecology”.<sup>14</sup>

I think it is safe to say that all of us have – and are experiencing – the extensive and grave impact of climate change. The daily news is replete with reports of catastrophes: super-typhoons, floods, heat waves, extreme weather conditions, droughts, earthquakes, massive forest fires, etc. These occurrences are not remote events but are in fact very close to home. On the social front, heavy migration from the global south to the global north is most evident, with dramatic and life-threatening crossing in the Mediterranean Sea, and between the border of the United States and Central American countries.

As TA communities, families, and groups, the General Assembly enjoins us to see integral ecology as a category of life proposing to:

- Adopt a more contemplative lifestyle, where being is valued more than doing and having.
- Take a stand in support of change that favors the common good and the care of the earth, our common home.
- Review our lifestyles, criteria, and consumption practices at the personal, community, institutional and social levels to adopt simpler and sustainable lifestyles.

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<sup>13</sup> XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (first session, Oct.4-29, 2023). *A Synodal Church in Mission, synthesis report*.

<sup>14</sup> Pope Benedict XVI. General Audience. August 26, 2009.

## ➔ Weavers of fraternity and communion in diversity

Efforts to build a just society require a capacity for fraternity. And universal fraternity and social friendship call for an acknowledgement of the worth of every human person, that every human being has the right to live with dignity and to develop integrally.

“God has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and has called them to live together as brothers and sisters”, declared Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb in the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together (2019).<sup>15</sup> The document is offered as a sign of the closeness among all who believe that God has created us to understand one another, cooperate with one another and live as brothers and sisters who love one another. Pope Francis and the Grand Imam offered an invitation to reconciliation and fraternity among all believers and non-believers, and among all people of goodwill; they appealed to those who cherish the values of tolerance and fraternity.

Not only within the religious circle do we hear the call to foster fraternity, tolerance and respect. The United Nations itself proclaimed the 4th of February as the International Day of Human Fraternity, with the stated purpose:

*Underlining the importance of raising awareness about different cultures and religions or beliefs and of education in the promotion of tolerance, which involves the acceptance by the public of and its respect for religious and cultural diversity, including with regard to religious expression, and underlining further the fact that education, in particular at school, should contribute in a meaningful way to promoting tolerance and the elimination of discrimination based on religion or belief,*

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<sup>15</sup> Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to the United Arab Emirates, 3-5 February 2019.

*Encouraging activities aimed at promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue in order to enhance peace and social stability, respect for diversity and mutual respect and to create, at the global level, and also at the regional, national and local levels, an environment conducive to peace and mutual understanding, Acknowledging that tolerance, pluralistic tradition, mutual respect and the diversity of religions and beliefs promote human fraternity...<sup>16</sup>*

The Teresian Association adds its own to these voices as declared in its Assembly: *We wish to continue weaving spaces for dialogue and inclusion in the face of cultural and religious diversity, spaces of encounter and fraternity with migrants, women, excluded people in the most diverse peripheries.*<sup>17</sup>

#### ➔ **Artisans of peace**

True peace “can be achieved only when we strive for justice through dialogue, pursuing reconciliation and mutual development”.<sup>18</sup>

In these troubled times marked by violent conflicts in many parts of the world, Pope Francis relentlessly calls for the cessation of violent confrontations. He pointed out that what it takes to build lasting peace goes way beyond the needed negotiation for shaping concrete paths to peace. For lasting peace, he speaks of processes of change that are crafted by peoples; everyone can act as an effective leaven by the way he or she lives each day. For him, a guarantee of genuine and lasting peace is integrating differences, a more difficult and slow process. What is important is to create processes of encounter, processes that help and enable people to accept differences. The culture of encounter brings enduring stability and it

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<sup>16</sup> Resolution adopted by the 47th plenary meeting of the UN General Assembly on 21 December 2020.

<sup>17</sup> Cfr. “Lines of mission, thrusts and commitments”. XIX General Assembly of the TA. August, 2023.

<sup>18</sup> Pope Francis, *Fratelli tutti*, 2020.

is forged through dialogue. If we want to encounter and help one another, we must dialogue. This dialogue entails approaching, speaking, listening, looking at, coming to know and understand one another, to find common ground.

The task of achieving peaceful coexistence calls us to persevere in the promotion and nurturance of the culture of encounter that puts at the center the human person and respect for the common good. The recently concluded Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops underscored the need for the promotion of the culture of dialogue and encounter as part of building communion among all peoples.

*In a world of violence and fragmentation, a witness is ever more urgent to the unity of humanity, its common origin and common destiny, in a coordinated and reciprocal solidarity toward social justice, peace, reconciliation and care for our common home. The Church is aware that the Spirit can speak through women and men of every religion, belief, and culture.*

*In a world where the number of migrants and refugees is increasing while the willingness to welcome them is decreasing and where the foreigner is viewed with increasing suspicion, it is appropriate for the Church to engage decisively in education, in the culture of dialogue and encounter, combating racism and xenophobia, especially through pastoral formation. Equally, it is necessary to engage in concrete projects for the integration of migrants.<sup>19</sup>*

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<sup>19</sup> XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (first session, October 4-29, 2023). A Synodal Church in Mission, Synthesis Report.

## Is there a need to re-create and re-invigorate our groups and communities?

The centenary of the Teresian Association's approval as a work of the Church is an important juncture in our journey as an Association, to seriously take stock of how we are as an Association and how relevant and opportune is our response in the light of our charism.

As lay people, our lives ordinarily revolve in the family, in the workplaces, in the neighborhood, recreational spaces, in our participation in parishes and civic involvement. While going about our daily routines we encounter people from different walks of life; most of the societies and the settings we live in are characterized by diversity -- diverse cultures, ethnicity, religion, beliefs, worldviews, etc. The world offers a multitude of ways of understanding life, its sense and its meaning. As a people who opted to be disciples of Jesus, making the life of Jesus a pattern for our lives, how do we situate ourselves among our contemporaries, fellow sojourners in this world faced with many challenges, threats, as well as possibilities?

Luigino Bruni, in his book *La Comunità Fragile*, shared an insight which I invite you to ponder on:

*Why does Jesus order his apostles not to take for the journey "any bread, no bag, no money..."? Jesus is creating a new kind of person and thus a new kind of community. Here we understand why Christians at first were called "those of the way" or those who walked. His community was a mobile community, a following, a walking behind, a returning "wandering Aramean", ", a matter of spirit and foot. Tent, encampment, precariousness, non-permanency. And this is how Christian communities remained for decades, the decades that forever changed history. [...]*

*The early Church was not born monolithic and compact because Jesus sent his disciples out and about, made them nomadic and non-residential, as he himself was... This community is not a*

*messianic court, it is not an esoteric community... but a missionary and nomadic community, coming together from time to time to immediately start again...*

*Only in this way could a Church be born that would soon be able to reach all corners of the earth, because its pillars had been forged at the roadside.*

*Spiritual communities, certainly the most authentic and healthy ones, are born and grow on the road. In the course of time, however, it is almost inevitable that the warmth of the home will win out over the cold of the road, and so little by little from communities made up of 'annunciators' (proclaimers) they become communities of spiritual goods, and sometimes this internal consumption becomes so important that one no longer feels on one's flesh the cold of those along the road. And that is how the community dies, but it can rise again if one day they relearn the discipline of the road.<sup>20</sup>*

### **Share the charism, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard (Acts 4: 20)**

**Teresian Association, a people reaching out, share the charism you have received!**<sup>21</sup> Sharing the charism implies opening our communities and groups to other seekers of meaning, of fellowship experience and fraternity, of a platform that could contribute to the good of society. Sharing the charism also implies inviting our family, friends and colleagues to join hands with us in our endeavors to contribute to the building of a more just, inclusive and humane world.

The testimony that we could give to the world of today, especially to young people, is a life lived with a purpose that transcends ourselves. A purpose that springs from a committed discipleship in Jesus and his mission to bring about the reign of God;

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<sup>20</sup> Luigino Bruni, *La comunità fragile. Perché occorre cambiare molto per non perdere troppo*. Rome, 2022.

<sup>21</sup> Priority of the 19th General Assembly of the TA, 2023.

a discipleship where we derive meaning and purpose for our lives; which also gives direction, generates energy and sustains our hope, resilience and strength.

As we strive to live in fidelity the charism that God has gifted us with, Pope Francis offers the following challenge:

*Therefore, do not be afraid to pound the streets, to enter every corner of society, to go out to the city limits, to touch the wounds of our people... this is the Church of God that rolls up its sleeves to go out to meet others, without judging or condemning them, but rather reaching out to them to support, to encourage or simply to accompany them in their lives.<sup>22</sup>*

### **Mary, gentle Mother and fearless disciple**

Father Poveda confirmed Mary's role in the Teresian Association in no uncertain terms. In its one-hundred-year history there is no doubt that the loving hand of Mary has blessed and guided it with predilection. The Teresian Association was conceived under her loving gaze, and we have always looked up to her as our ideal and inspiration, protector and guide. Far from being a spectator in the mission of her Son, Mary was fully engaged in the redemptive work of Christ.

In the prologue of the book, *Miryam of Judah*, Mary speaks beautifully, thus:

*I journey age upon age*

*to gift with blessing this people*

*hallowed and hallowing;*

*to gift with blessing this material envelope we call living*

*in which the heart of God is tucked.*

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<sup>22</sup> Message of the Holy Father to the President of the Spanish Episcopal Conference for the National Congress of the Laity (Madrid, 14 to 16 February 2020).

...

*I journey as a Jew of Judah's clan*

*as one called forth from familiarity to ground myself in God,  
as one called forth from the security of bondage,  
as one summoned into the wilderness of enslavement.*

*Escaped! Delivered to the raging freedom of maturity.*

*Responding once to the love of God,*

*I am now and forever responsible.*

*Like one who does not halt between,*

*I cast my lot with the still, small Voice.*

...

*History is our hope.*

*God our intent.*

*The world is our responsibility.*

*We tell the story with our lives speaking*

*what has gone before*

*and what is now.*

*We are responsive to all that has been,*

*responsible for what will be.*

*Responding, we construct new stories in our time.*

*We are a people not commissioned to preserve,*

*but to remember;*

*not held in rigidity, but faithfulness.*

*We are a living legacy of human wholeness*

*rooted in the grasp of the divine.<sup>23</sup>*

In our celebration of the one-hundred-year journey of the TA since its Pontifical Approval, we echo Mary's **MAGNIFICAT** for all the wonderful things the Lord has done for us and, with her, renew our

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<sup>23</sup> Ann Johnson, *Miryam of Judah*, Indiana, 1987.

**FIAT** to listen to and follow God's will as we strive to remain faithful to the mission of this Association to which we are so blessed to belong.

We heed Mary's words to the servants at the wedding in Cana, "Do whatever he tells you". May we, too, be diligent in listening to and distinguishing the voice of the Lord.

For the year 2024, let our prayer be:

**Thank you, Lord, for calling us to be your disciples;  
give us a discerning heart that always seeks to follow your will.**

With warm good wishes,

Gregoria Ruiz

Rome, January 1, 2024.





ta teresian association