

**OUR
EVANGELIZING
STYLE
IN
SOCIAL ACTION**



SISTERS OF CHARITY OF ST. ANNE

INDEX

1. PRESENTATION OF THE DOCUMENT.
2. CONTEXT.
 - 2.1. Our World
 - 2.2. Our Congregational Identity
 - 2.3. Our Evangelizing Style
3. GENERAL OBJECTIVE
IN THE SOCIAL ACTION.
 - 3.1. Explicit Proclamation of the Gospel
 - 3.2. Service
4. OUR PRIORITY: PERSON.
5. COMMUNITY
IN THE SOCIAL ACTION.
 - 5.1. The Religious Community
 - 5.2. Professionals
 - 5.3. Destinataries
 - 5.4. Volunteers
 - 5.5. Saint Anne Family
6. CONCLUSION.

1. PRESENTATION OF THE DOCUMENT

Imagine a circle drawn on the ground, is to say, a round line shaped with a compass, around a central point. Precisely the most inner point of the circle is called the centre. Pay attention to what I am going to tell you. Imagine that the circle is the world, the centre is God, and the radiuses are the different ways or forms of the lives of the people. When the Saints desiring to come closer to God, walk towards the centre of the circle, the more they penetrate to the interior, draw closer to one another and, at the same time, they come closer to God. The more they come to God, the more they are closer to one another; and the closer they are to one another, they are drawn closer to God.

- Doroteo de Gaza, Palestinian monk (S. VI) -

*Our Founders and First Sisters
respond to the urgent needs of their time,
attend the prisoners of war,
accompany the women condemned to death,
fight for justice,
and are in solidarity with those who are hungry.*

- Const. 55 –

These pages want to be a help for us, to be rooted in the Gospel, to remain attentive to the urgencies around us and to respond to what is our mission: **to evangelize with our life** in a way that is fraternal and true.

God does not call us in the first place to carry out a determined task, but to the plenitude of being. All of us are called to unfold the best of ourselves. All of us are interdependent and co-responsible because we are one and the same; the sufferings of our brethren pain us to the core, because they are part of our life.

Jesus went about through this world witnessing to the love of the Father and accompanying the poor and little ones in their process of freedom. (Ref. Const. 55) What Jesus is one cannot learn intellectually, we can discover Him only through our inner experience. Living as He lived, loving as He loved and loving what He loved. Passing over from material to spiritual, from darkness to light, from death to Life. This was accepted and made life by our Founders and First Sisters, and left to us as inheritance. Throughout the history each generation incarnated the same. This continues to be our legacy and our challenge.

2. CONTEXT

2.1. OUR WORLD

We are part of the world where even in the XXI century, our less fortunate brethren die as victims of Unger and thirst. To look around, to know our surrounding, the society where we live is the first step in the Social Action. The clamour of the poor reaches up to our ears and hearts. To respond to the signs of the times is urgent. We are convoked to live consciously, sensible to the realities and to listen to God where life clamours to us. (CLAR)

Due to globalization, the countries have broken their frontiers and the negative effects of the violation of Human Rights are present with more or less visibility all over the world like:

- Human trade, trafficking of organs.
- Child slavery (soldiers, child labourers).
- Massive emigration, displaced and refugees (due to wars, natural calamities).
- Hunger, precariousness, starvation.
- Arms trade, trafficking of drugs.
- Over exploitation of the natural resources and contamination.
- Violence in general and gender violence.
- Corruption, even that of the medias.
- Indebtedness.
- Unemployment...

Other crude reality that worries us is the economical crisis that affects specially the poorest perpetuating their situation. This crisis is the result of dehumanizing consumption and due to inefficient, manipulative political management.

In front of such alarming real situations we:

- Witness the Compassionate and Merciful God.
- Maintain an attitude of vigilante in order to respond to the new urgencies of poverty our world presents us.
- Defend the dignity of the person and right to a decent life.
- Propagate and defend the Human Rights.
- Denounce unjust structures which oppress people.
- Opt to build a common space, a place where all fit in, where the dignity of each person is recognized, where the most vulnerable persons, the outcasts and marginalized can find hope, recover the sense of life and their true identity: to be child of God, blessed.
- Want to live from an ecological sensitivity and sustainability that promotes the equilibrium and harmony, knowing that natural resources are exhaustible and all that I have and do not need, belong to others.
- Encourage and support attitudes and actions which promote justice, equality and peace, building a more human world.

The Congregation from its beginnings has lived a preferential option for the neediest seeing in them the same Lord.

... with all, over few basic principles is founded..., and a capacity of self-giving without measure, encouraged by a fundamental principle: all that you do to the poor, Jesus received it as done to Him.”¹

2.2. OUR CONGREGATIONAL IDENTITY

Jesus, being one with the Father and in response to His will, carried out the plan of salvation of mankind: healed the sick, served the poor and proclaimed the Good News of the Kingdom, witnessing thus the love and mercy of God. He gave Himself to all and loved us until the end, giving us the new commandment of Love: *Love one another as I have loved you (Jn 15:12)*. (Const. 5)

Following the footprints of Jesus, our Congregation is born in the Royal and General Hospital of Our Lady of Grace of Zaragoza (Spain) where it carries out tasks in different fields, attending with preference the poorest and the neediest. (Ref. Const. 51)

The First Sisters share with heroism the pain and misery in a constant attitude of contemplation in action, work, boldness, risk, simplicity... forming thus the identity of the Congregation. (Ref. Const. 3)

¹ DH II / Const. 1805, p. 69.

Right from the beginning, our Founders and First Sisters lived attentive to the needs of their surroundings. Although they had come from Barcelona to take care of the poor sick, soon, they found other fields of commitment within the Hospital itself:

... one in charge of the orphans and the wet nurses and another attending also the order and moderation of the Ward of Secret women... other for the department of the mentally sick²;

... accompanying the Passion Preacher³;

... the instruction and care of those with skin disease and pregnant women who are isolated⁴;

... and to serve... even the soldiers⁵;

... and the mentally sick and skin diseased⁶,

... the unfortunate women who wanted to hide their illegitimate maternity in silence...⁷.

It is the house of the passersby and poor: *... in it were admitted all those unfortunate ones, without minding neither for their nationality nor their faith in whichever language they asked for it⁸;*

... assist the prisoners⁹.

² DH I, JB, p. 159.

³ Ibid. p. 160.

⁴ Ibid. p. 162.

⁵ Ibid. p. 163.

⁶ Ibid. p. 164.

⁷ Ibid. p. 167.

⁸ Ibid. p. 167.

⁹ DH I, p. xxix.

Accompany those condemned to death: *they will accompany to the gallows to women condemned to death*¹⁰.

They work for justice, live in solidarity with those who are hungry: *they used to give up their ration in benefit of the poor sick and also gave up salaries*¹¹;

looking for funds to meet the needs of the Hospital: ... *they begged for them publicly in the streets and at the doors of the Churches*¹²;

attend to the prisoners of war, got their freedom: ... *during the domination, number of prisoners received from this pious asylum, cloths to cover themselves; and with that many recovered the desired freedom*¹³.

They admitted the sick and the poor in the Hospital: ... *this asylum of suffering humanity*¹⁴.

The only requisite to be admitted to the Hospital was to be sick or poor: ...*this Holy Hospital that has its doors open to all*¹⁵.

... *The poor, the "little ones" of the Gospel, in all the manifestations of helplessness, were the preferred ones and the invariable field of their activity. The less attractive side of the society is the scenery of their lives: sick, wounded, prisoners, those who skin disease, mentally ill, orphans, abandoned people, persons*

¹⁰ DH I, p. xxx.

¹¹ DH I, JB, p. 164, para. 10.

¹² Ibid., p. 101, para. 1.

¹³ Ibid., p. 105, 112.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 105.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 116.

*without material resources and moral protection, within the Hospital; tiny insignificant villages, simple people very occupied, outside the same*¹⁶.

*The founding group is a living example of adaptation in front of the emerging difficulties..., of launching themselves into new forms when permitted and even demanded according to the times: health techniques, assisting to masculine gender patients, the contagious diseases, prisoners, to educating tasks... One and the same spirit gave origin to variety of tasks at the service of the neediest, of the most helpless of the society*¹⁷.

At present, the persons who recognize ourselves with the Charism of Charity *share mission and life from an attitude of welcome, service and explicit proclamation of the Gospel, especially to the poorest and neediest in attitude of dialogue, overcoming any kind of frontiers.* (Ref. Const. 8)

We feel called to live the mission *with simplicity and gratitude, with all retail and “with all love”, making reality thus the words of Jesus: “what you did to one of these of my little ones, you did it unto me”.* (Ref. Const. 11)

2.3. OUR EVANGELIZING STYLE

Jesus makes present the Father making reality the words of the prophet Isaiah: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good*

¹⁶ DH I, JB, Introduction, p. xxxv.

¹⁷ DH II / Const. 1805, Introduction, p. 10.

news to the poor; has sent me to announce freedom to the captives, to the blind sight, to set free the oppressed, to announce the year of grace of the Lord. (Lk 4:18).

Our Founders and First Sisters responding to the needs of their time, with their lives, bequeathed us a specific evangelizing style: (Ref. Const. 39).

- Generous, unlimited self-giving, even to the point of heroism, with total availability.
- With humble, simple and diligent service.
- With a life of poverty and detachment.
- With goodness in dealing, persevering patience and fortitude of spirit.
- In an attitude of welcome and closeness.
- With capacity to adapt oneself with new situations and to face the difficulties even risking one's own life. (Const. 45)

For that, we feel called:

- To live the Gospel with a liberating and transcendent sense.
- To manifest like Christ the love of the Father to the world.
- To be open to the Gospel values we discover in those around us, in the other cultures, in other religions.
- To esteem and love the person seeing Christ in him or her.

- To construct a more human society for a more human world.
- To be ferment of fraternity, justice and peace.
- To attend with preference and solicitude the neediest, considering them as *our lords*.
- To assist and work for the promotion of persons and defending their rights so that from their own culture they may construct a more dignified community. (Ref. Const. 44).
- To be mystics and prophetess of our times, by effectively living the contemplation in action.
- To denounce the causes that create exclusion.

Our Social Action must be guided by evangelical criteria and be based and supported on authentic human values:

- ❑ ***HEARTFELT COMPASSION / MERCY*** as style of life for a new social order. Compassion which is Love of God which Christ has revealed to us and that which we want to make life in our service to our brothers and sisters.
- ❑ ***EVANGELICAL POVERTY*** which gives freedom in front of greed, places itself by the side of the poor, fights against everything that produces marginalization and involves in the promotion and liberation of persons.

- ❑ **HOPE.** Only those who search sincerely justice for the Kingdom of God are capable of discovering with humility the seeds of hope.
- ❑ **CAPACITY TO “SEE” AND “ASSUME” SINCERELY THE REALITY** which certain persons live *here and now*. Attentive to listen in the *silence of the oppressed*, of the marginalized and of all those who suffer, the call of the Spirit to come out of ourselves and of our houses and temples, in order to go to meet those who need us.

3. GENERAL OBJECTIVE IN THE SOCIAL ACTION

The Pastoral Ministry of Social Action has as its objective to make visible the merciful love of God through the explicit **PROCLAMATION** of the Good News and **SERVICE** of promotion, development, autonomy and dignifying the persons. (Const. 56)

3.1. EXPLICIT PROCLAMATION OF THE GOOD NEWS

- Proclaiming with hope the Good News of Jesus who witnessed the love of the Father and accompanied the poor and the little ones in their process of freedom.
- Denouncing the actions that prevent the poor and excluded from the possibility to live as persons.
- Developing the Pastoral of presence, closeness and compassion.
- Witnessing with a life of transparency, sincerity and coherence. (A.C.G. 2010)
- Incarnating and transmitting the Gospel values with our lives in the culture where we live.
- Being prophets of hope in our time.
- Facilitating others the opportunity of knowing and deepening the Word of God in order to enlighten the life from it. (EN 22)

3.2. SERVICE

To transform the world empowering the weaker sections of the society, through processes of accompaniment, raising awareness and freedom, making visible to all the merciful love of God.

- Living with openness and flexibility in order to respond in a creative way the true demands of those who are in situation of social marginalization and at risk.
- Contributing to the well being of the persons, mainly of the less fortunate, fighting against all forms of exclusion and social discrimination.
- Staying in direct contact with the social needs.
- Witnessing to a way of life simple and austere through our being and doing.
- Involving ourselves in options which are real and incarnated.
- Creating a family atmosphere where the persons may feel at home and accepted with dignity.
- Developing the capacity of listening in order to guess and understand the deeper needs of the person.
- Maintaining an itinerant attitude and availability when the needs of society and the cries of the poor thus demand.
- Promoting and defending the Human Rights.
- Fostering a culture of solidarity and peace.

- Collaborating for a sustainable development, equal opportunities for all, community participation, and the distribution of resources.
- Caring and respecting the ecosystem, beginning with the ordinary things of daily life.
- Living in harmony with the nature, receiving the whole creation as a gift for all living beings.
- Recognizing with esteem the diversity in religious, social and cultural aspects.
- Collaborating with other Entities and Institutions which work in favour of the excluded. (Ref. Const. & OL 56 - 57)
- Giving ourselves day after day with simplicity and delicacy and being available in those needs where greater risk is implied.
- Being available and in dialogue with the superiors in order to be sent to marginalized places.

4. OUR PRIORITY: PERSON

A person, possessor of maximum **DIGNITY**, as a social being, in **PROCESS** of **maturity** and **integration**, of becoming oneself and shaping **SOCIETY**, is the fundamental focus and centre of our action.

- ❑ **THE INALIENABLE DIGNITY OF THE PERSON.**
The value that sustains and supports our model of social action is the dignity of the person, as child of God.
- ❑ **BEING IN PROCESS OF GROWTH.** Both the person and the society of which forms part of, are in the process of becoming; they are not complete.
- ❑ **INTEGRAL BEING.** A person is unique and unrepeatable who possesses potentialities and capabilities which can lead to integration and maturity.
- ❑ **SOCIAL BEING.** A person, in a constitutive manner, is a being in relation. We are interdependent, we need one another in order to survive and grow.

The prime objective is to regain the person as a subject with adult age, “enabling” and providing with sufficient human and material resources so that can recover his/her own leading role in the construction of a just and more human society. To live is to collaborate in the creative work of God.

5. THE COMMUNITY IN THE TASK OF SOCIAL ACTION

Wherever we are, we form an integrated community with Sisters, professionals, task group and their beloved ones, collaborators and volunteers. We integrate ourselves harmoniously for a service of promotion, development, autonomy and dignifying of persons, with a concrete congregational style.

All of us participate actively in the mission according to our competences and responsibilities.

We consider the person as the centre of all our tasks.

The responsibilities we assume imply:

- To become aware that we work in a team.
- To make the social action project alive and participative, always keeping in mind the responsibilities of everyone.
- To create concrete channels of participation.
- To encourage the involvement of family, whenever it is considered positive for the person concerned.
- To evaluate periodically the quality of our social action.
- To promote and facilitate formation.
- To give transcendental dimension to our life and mission.
- To work with the system.

5.1. THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

The Community convokes, coordinates, and encourages. It is the unconditional presence in the social action. It is a house open to all, a place of welcome and listening.

The Community prays and accompanies the person, situating itself in the place of the other, helping him/her to open to Life. It is responsible to witness and give continuity to the Charism of Mother Rafols and John Bonal. Also of making known their lives and mission.

Therefore, the Community:

- Involves in the pastoral of social action in the measure of its possibilities.
- Encourages an atmosphere of freedom and participation facilitating among all the members union and communion.
- Promotes integral and holistic attention to the person in all the dimensions: physical, emotional, social and spiritual.
- Encourages the collaboration of the Laity.
- Welcomes, creates family atmosphere and accompanies.

5.2. PROFESSIONALS

In this announcing the faithful laity have an original and irreplaceable place: through them the Church of Christ is present in the most diverse sectors of the world, as sign and fountain of hope and love.

(ChL 7)

Those who collaborate with us and share our mission should have as priority:

- To attend with preference and kindness those who are more vulnerable.
- To collaborate in the unfolding of the mission with their professionalism at work.
- To carry out tasks of prevention, intervention and rehabilitation.
- To try to humanize the technology and procedures of attention and surrounding.
- To keep updating their personal and professional formation.
- To establish and maintain a cordial relationship with the companions.
- To train and facilitate the team work in the service of the Social Action.
- To coordinate and facilitate making good use of mass media and net working.

5.3. DESTINATARIES

Our destinataries themselves are protagonists in the process of recovering their dignity. They are agents of their own personal growth as they go on discovering the possibilities of transformation underlying in their own lives. We accompany their progress, encouraging their own autonomy and responsibility.

They have the right to be respected in:

- The secrecy and the confidentiality of their own process.
- The truth of the information over the things that affect them.
- The independence in the decisions over his/her situation.
- Choice of religion, culture and conscience.
- The process of growth; self reliance, decision over future.

5.4. COLLABORATORS - VOLUNTEERS

Their contribution implies gratuitousness and solidarity and at the same time it also supposes an experience of personal enrichment.

For the good functioning of the volunteers it is necessary to offer an adequate formation and clarification of his/her responsibilities.

5.5. SAINT ANNE FAMILY

We recognize that the charismatic gift which we have received from the Spirit has also been granted to other persons who in different ways are in communion with the Congregation, forming with it the “Saint Anne’s Family”. (Const. 9). They put into practice and update in day to day life the values of our congregational charism.

We, all the Sisters, are responsible to make known our congregational family to others and to invite all those who feel called to live the charism, spirit and mission of our Founders Father John Bonal and Mother Maria Rafols.

6. CONCLUSION

*Jesus went about doing good
and healing those who were oppressed by the evil.*

- Acts 10: 38 -

He loved us first. The experience of being loved by God makes us capable of loving our brethren. The Kingdom, as promise of God for the humanity, is love.

This love is made reality in the history. It consists in recognizing and restoring the dignity of each one of the creaturas of God. It is concretized when we establish human relationships based on justice, common well being, the universal distribution of goods, in the respect to the nature, and in the defence of Human Rights, believing a different world, which is more human, is possible.

To follow Jesus, is to live as He lived. If *He went about doing good*, our journey too must consist in doing what He did and in the way He did it. We cannot look in other direction. ... *Go and do the same...*, to live compassion just like the Good Samaritan. (Ref. Lk 10:33-37).

We are responsible to carry out this mission: may all His creatures have life and have it in abundance. *I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance.* (Jn 10:10) We believe in the creative and liberating power of Jesus of Nazareth.

ABBREVIATIONS

- Lk** Gospel of St. Luke.
- Jn** Gospel of St. John.
- Acts** Book of the Acts of the Apostles.
- EN** *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. Apostolic Exhortation on the Evangelization in the Contemporary World. (08/12/1975)
- ChL** *Christifideles Laici*. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World. (30/12/1988)
- DH I** The Sisters of Charity of Saint Anne and the Hospital of Our Lady of Grace of Saragosse. Historical Documents I. Summary of the Books of Sitiadas. 1808–1858. Jose Ignacio Tellechea, 1968.
- DH II / Const. 1805**
The Sisters of Charity of Saint Anne and the Hospital of Our Lady of Grace of Saragosse. Historical Documents II. First Constitutions. Jose Ignacio Tellechea, 1976.
- DH I, JB** Father John Bonal. Helper in Passion. Founder. Beggar. Historical Documents I (1769–1829). Jose Ignacio Tellechea, 1974.

- Const.** Constitutions of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Anne (28/12/2011).
- OL** Organization and Life of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Anne (28/12/2011).
- A.C.G.** Chapter Agreements of the XXVII General Chapter (2010).