

**Congregation of the Sisters
of Our Lady of Sorrows**



**CHARISM CORE VALUES AND
MISSION STATEMENT**

July 2017

The Core Values are the essential elements of the charism of the Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows; the Mission statement illustrates the role that the OLS charism has in the Church and in the world. These two documents, fruit of much prayer, reflection and dialogue, were written by the last General Council and were officially presented to the XXXIV General Chapter in July 2017. The Chapter Assembly accepted them ad experimentum for the next six years, until 2023.

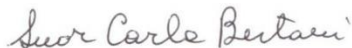
The Core Values statement contains the seven values which are essential for us as Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows, values inherited from Elisabetta Renzi, our Foundress. They not

only identify and unite us, but also they are meant to be at the basis of all our personal, communal and congregational choices. They become our “common traits” which, in spite of all our differences – age, culture, nationality – give us communalities as members of the same family.

The Mission statement expresses what we, as Congregation, are called to do for our brothers and sisters today. Inspired by the example of Mother Elisabetta, whose great desire was to spend her life for the Lord and in service of her neighbor, we set out to give answers to the needs of our times.

May we, the Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows, pray and reflect personally and communally on these two documents in order to make them ours; may they help our lay collaborators, and those with whom we will

share them, knowing the charism and our mission so that, together, we may give apostolic answers to the needs of today according to the heart of God, and with our unique characteristics.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Suor Carla Bertani". The script is cursive and elegant, with the first letters of "Suor" and "Bertani" being capitalized and prominent.

Mother Carla Bertani

Superior General

Rome, August 26, 2017

178th Anniversary of the Canonical Erection of the Congregation

CHARISM CORE VALUES

ad experimentum

1. UNION WITH JESUS CRUCIFIED

Called by God to consecrated life, and moved by the *“the desire to live a truly holy life”*¹, we live in union with Jesus Crucified who, out of love, gave himself for us.

Our relationship with Him is for us a priority, and we nourish it through an intense spiritual and prayer life, personal and communal, and by meditating often on His life, passion and death.

Convinced that *“the Alleluia dwells beyond Calvary”*², and that *“every struggle*

¹ Rule 1, I

² Caterina Giovannini Elisabetta Renzi, *a Biographical Sketch* p.44

is small to reach heaven”³, we do not back away from the Cross.

2. POVERTY AND HUMILITY

“Poverty and humility are the two arms of the Cross.”⁴

Learning from Elisabetta, we choose to live:

- Detached from the world and from worldly possessions, practicing a poverty which *“should not possess anything, and should barely have the use of what is necessary. I say barely because Jesus Christ, in the manger where he was born and on the Cross where he died, did not have everything*

³ Caterina Giovannini *Elisabetta Renzi, a Biographical Sketch: Letter to Maddalena Z.* p.38

⁴ Caterina Giovannini *Elisabetta Renzi, a Biographical Sketch* p.47

*that was necessary.”*⁵

- Detached from ourselves, “*accepting and amending our defects*”⁶, doing “*everything with a spirit of profound, sincere and true humility*”⁷, “*not just with external gestures, actions and words, but truly and sincerely.*”⁸

3. JOY AND HAPPINESS

Joy and happiness are our inseparable companions.⁹ They stem from the awareness that “*the good Lord loves us*”¹⁰ and that He is at our side in times of joy

⁵ Rule 1, II

⁶ Cfr. Rule 1, II, I

⁷ Rule 3, “On Humility”

⁸ Rule 3, “On Humility”

⁹ Cfr. Rule 1, II

¹⁰ Caterina Giovannini *Elisabetta Renzi, a Biographical Sketch*: letter to her niece Giuseppina p.27

and when we are under the cross.

Because of His presence, we can live the different situations of life with balance, carrying out our daily responsibilities willingly and with serenity.

4. TRUST IN PROVIDENCE

God is our Father! We entrust ourselves to His provident love, sure that He will provide us with the means which are necessary to accomplish His works.

Without worrying or being anxious about the present or the future, in our daily choices we follow the example of Elisabetta: *“I will blindly abandon myself in the hands of providence, to dispose of me as she pleases.”*¹¹

¹¹ Gioacchino Zavoli *Funeral Eulogy* p. 22

5. SEARCH FOR THE WILL OF GOD

“Our heart should be full of the will of God. I want only what he wants, and love only what he does.”¹²

Personally and communally we seek the will of God which becomes manifest to us through events and human mediations; with inner freedom we welcome it and we abandon ourselves to it.

Through dialogue and open discussion, we learn to submit our own will to that of our superiors even when they call us to something different from what we had envisioned.

6. COMMON LIFE

The Lord calls us to live as sisters in community with the goal of having “only

¹² Caterina Giovannini *Elisabetta Renzi, a Biographical Sketch* p.30

one soul and one heart in God."¹³

Sharing all that we are and all that we have, and placing in common personal talents and material goods is a distinctive trait of our being together.

We build cordial and peaceful relations among ourselves heeding the word of Elisabetta: "*Charity should be in all human actions and in all words.*"¹⁴ When we receive an offense and are faced with misunderstandings, we are willing to make the first step in asking and giving forgiveness.

With serenity we accept what the community provides for us; with our work we contribute to the ministries of the Congregation, to the sustenance of its members and to helping the poor.

¹³ Rule 3, II

¹⁴ Rule 4, VI

We carry out our responsibilities or our role of authority as a service, knowing that among us *“there is no distinction of importance, but we are all equal.”*¹⁵ and for this no one thinks of herself as being superior to others.

7. AT THE SERVICE OF EDUCATION

We are educators by vocation, at every moment of life and in everything we do.

*“We love God and neighbor with the love of a thousand hearts and the work of a thousand hands.”*¹⁶ With this spirit, and guided by the values of the Gospel, we set out to dispel the ignorance of faith through evangelization and the teaching of human and Christian virtues, of

¹⁵ Cfr. Rule 3

¹⁶ Cfr. Caterina Giovannini *Elisabetta Renzi, a Biographical Sketch* p.52

personal and communal responsibility, and of work, always with love, steadfastness and creativity.

Attentive to all forms of educational poverty emerging in different times, preferably we choose to serve the little ones and the youth in areas where there is less religious presence and there are fewer educational opportunities. Where necessary, we give particular attention to women promoting their dignity.

Preferably, we exercise our educational ministry in schools and other educational ministries, whether they are ours or belong to others, in parishes and by ministering to families.

MISSION STATEMENT

ad experimentum

THE FOUNDRESS ELISABETTA RENZI

Following a profound experience of God's love and of union with Jesus Crucified, Elisabetta is strengthened in her belief that *"other than God nothing is important, nothing, nothing in the world"* and a desire is born in her, that of leading *"a truly holy life."*

If there is nothing more important than God, then the greatest danger for society of her times was the *"ignorance of the faith"*. Countering this ignorance becomes Elisabetta's Mission, and in reaching out to the entire society, she chooses to minister to girls and young women, offering them education and vocational training along with teaching them Gospel values.

Attentive to the events in which she sees God's presence, with great faith Elisabetta establishes the religious family of the Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows. Characteristic of the Congregation is the primacy of Jesus Crucified as the one and only love. Its spiritual traits are happiness of spirit - the fruit of abandonment to Providence, detachment from oneself, and constant search for the will of God.

THE SISTERS OF OUR LADY OF SORROWS

Like Elisabetta, we too choose God as our only love. Our relationship with Him is a priority, and we nourish it through an intense spiritual life and prayer.

We live in community, serenely accepting what is offered to us, and sharing what we have and who we are. Together we seek God's will, which we accept with inner freedom, abandoning ourselves to it. With our work we

contribute to the ministry of the Congregation, support its members and to give to the poor.

We are educators by vocation, and educating is therefore our preferred way of loving other and evangelizing them. We carry out our mission today in several countries, ministering to those who are educationally poor and ignorant of the faith. We mainly minister to children and young people and, where necessary, to women.

We are present in schools of all types that belong either to us or to others, in social-educational and social-assistance ministries with children in community homes, people with disabilities, single mothers; everywhere we offer them a caring environment.

We support the church's work of catechesis and evangelization, collaborating in pastoral and family ministry, in youth and vocational ministry. We privilege the poorest

areas and those where there are no other religious congregations.

Our educational style combines being loving and firm, always showing happiness of spirit.

We take care of our professional preparation and live out our mission with a sense of responsibility, with creativity and industriousness, in dialogue with the local institutions, civil and ecclesiastical.

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