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SESSION FOR PROVINCIAL BURSARS [OCTOBER 13-23, 2019]

Welcome and Opening Message **Auteuil - 13 October 2019**

Very dear Sisters,

Good morning and a warm welcome to one and all to the Session of Provincial Bursars 2019.

It gives me immense joy to address you this morning. It is indeed wonderful to have you with us at the mother-house to share experiences, to learn from one another, to rethink economic matters in a manner faithful to our charism and mission, and to reflect together on how to take the congregation forward keeping in mind the new challenges that we face in our day-to-day life in a secularized society.

Your mission as Provincial Bursars, as described by the Rule of Life is “to administer the temporal goods of the province, in dependence on the Provincial Superior and with the guidance of her council, ... finding practical ways of expressing the Spirit of poverty and of sharing” [RL 109].

As you know, when we administer the goods of the congregation, we keep in mind the policies of our congregation (Rule of Life), the teachings of the Church, and the laws of our respective Societies.

Our Rule of Life Numbers 144-155 deal with the administration of the properties of the congregation and highlight two important guidelines for your mission.

- The wealth and property of the congregation is NOT our private property, but it belongs to the congregation and to the church.
- Ultimately, it belongs to God and it must be used at the service of God’s Kingdom or at the service of God’s mission.

The Vatican document, *Economy at the Service of the Charism and Mission*, identifies three values and three principles as mandatory requirements for your mission:

- Values: Credibility, Professionalism and Experience [see page 57].
- Principles: Responsibility, Transparency and Trust [see page 70].

I do not want to go into the details of the document. I am sure, during the session, you will have an occasion to study the document and to deepen these important aspects of your mission.

Pope Francis reminded us on many occasions that our finances are at the service of the charism and mission which would imply two things: (i) be professional and (ii) do not lose the evangelical aspect of the gratuity of grace when we deal with the money and properties of the congregation.

We are aware that economic laws and policies in each country are very different from one another. I would encourage you to study and be familiar with these laws and policies so that we can be more prudent and effective in our respective local contexts.

George Lorimer, a well-known American journalist of the 19th Century, once said: "It's good to have money and the things that money can buy, but it's also good to check up once in a while and make sure that you haven't lost the things that money can't buy." I find this thought even more relevant in the context of our consecrated life. I would, therefore, like to add the following:

- Money can buy a beautiful chapel, but not an experience of God.
- Money can buy a lovely convent, but not a loving community.
- Money can buy a comfortable socio-pastoral centre or a well-equipped school, but not dedication, commitment and social transformation.


As we deal with money on behalf of the congregation/province, let us reconsider our attitudes once in a while and make sure that we have not lost the things that money cannot buy such as kindness, understanding, respect and joyful detachment from the power of money. I invite you to be firm and flexible as well as to be professional and gracious at the service of life and common good.

So, the question is: How do we become truly professionals in financial matters in our respective local contexts without losing the evangelical grace of being at the service of God's mission?

I appreciate much and thank each one of you for your generous service and commitment to your respective provinces. I also take this opportunity to thank Sr Cecile Franquin, our beloved General Bursar, and her excellent supporting financial team – Sr Irene Cecile from the General Council, and the ad hoc committee members, Sisters Marisabel (Spain), Fe Emmanuel (Asia Pacific) and Anne Guillien (France), who prepared this session for you with much love and enthusiasm, and with special attention to the details.

So, Sisters, have a fruitful session, enjoy it and be enriched and renewed in body, mind and spirit. And return to your respective provinces as GOOD NEWS!

I wish you all the best and God's blessings!



Rekha M Chennattu, RA
Superior General