

# COMMUNIO IN CHRISTO

*Our Life -  
Our Works*

Digital Spiritual Letter No. 32, February 17th 2025

*Theme:*

## THE CHURCH - LIFE AND HOPE FOR ALL

### SEAT IN LIFE



For the present Spiritual Letter, we have chosen a reflection from the 17th book of Mother Marie Therese bearing the title: "Who am I to be called by you? – A charism speaks". It includes texts from the year 1986 and the headline of the following meditation is programmatic also for today: "The Church – Life and hope for all".

As the motto for the Jubilee 2025 Pope Francis has chosen "Pilgrims of hope". In his letter to Monsignor Rino Fisichella on the Jubilee 2025 he wrote: „We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us, and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision.“

Mother Marie Therese's concrete example can help each one of us through the imitation of Christ to combine a deep love for the Church with an effective care for our neighbour.

Hearfelt wishes and united in prayer

Yours

**Jaison Thazhathil**

Superior General



## REFLECTION OF MOTHER MARIE THERESE

“And so I say to you, you are Peter,  
and on this rock I will build my church.”

(Mt 16:18)

15.7.1986

With growing anxiety I observe the ecclesiastical life. In deep contemplation I came to realize that I have to reflect upon the life of the Church as a whole. She is bubbling with life. Her heart is characterized by a rare liveliness. She proclaims the life and working of the word incarnate. She represents Christ. She is the sacrament of the meeting with God. The road to God leads through the Church. God entered into a covenant with us. He makes his kingdom visible in the Church. He remedies the division, guarantees his fidelity and the prospect of the salvation.

After all my reflections how could I better describe the Church than as the mother on whose breast I can refresh myself? Her purity is a feast for my eyes and the security of my future.

In her I detect the order in which the faithful and the hierarchy secure her survival.

The Church, she is the one Church. In her the whole Christ encourages us to live and to practice the Imitation of Jesus. She is the source of energy that wings my steps on the road to the great experience of my perfection. She is our home here on earth and the link to the beyond, in which God is the home and the profusion of bliss. Tenderly my soul is reaching for her in order to fill up my nothingness. It reaches for God who has come so close to it. The wishes do not cease. The desire to live in this house (the Church) forever increases. She closes my past, radiates the divine magnificence and makes me familiar with it. I delve into her beneficial abundance and I can sense the love that unites with my nothingness. My dreams do not end, I know of her holiness and she guarantees my perfection.

I want to write about her and her beneficial reality, which I experienced personally. There is so much talk about her, her life being described in so many different ways. What some people regard as the truth is considered a reason for a withdrawal by others. Some people mistake her for being politics, her purity is questioned. Her truth is a subject for critical conversation. When her doctrine is split, when she is deprived of her pulsating life, it is said that she needed to become more democratic and to adapt herself to the times. Authority is not understood. The “Tu es Petrus” does not belong in the free, modern world.



Her very heart and essence is Christ... To have a lively friendship with him – testimony to a genuine Christianity – is outdated. Christ has become a cliché. Christ seems to be of less importance than ever in the Church. We have blocked up the source. We do not need the nourishment. Our feelings are without depth. Our ties with the Church are very weak. The possible punishment at the time of our death almost turns us into hypocrites. And strangely enough it is especially the Christians that see everything, do not approve of anything and criticize everything.

I feel the Host's eyes resting on them. I hear his roaring voice, filling the room: You are trying to tell the people that you are just; but God knows your hearts. For what men think to be magnificent is an outrage in the eyes of God. But they, too, live in the Church and Christ accepts them. His severe words from the Gospel pour out the mercy, for they, too, are still destined for the truth.



A new group of people fills the room: the unloving Christians. The word from the Gospel comes alive: "A new commandment I give you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (Jn 13:34) - a clear directive to the Christians who so readily condemn others. Within the Church, whose centre is Christ, we receive the divine power that urges us to love the neighbour – a sign of our love for God.

My reflection leads up to bearing witness as for many Christians the obedience is to be strictly observed. The commandment is complied with in accordance with the letter of the law in order to avoid being punished by the supreme court of justice. The love for God, however, makes the commandment almost superfluous. Love fulfils the commandment: Love your neighbour; those Christians also live in the true Church and Jesus has great mercy especially for them.

Words from the Scripture are filling the room in which the Host makes space for all: "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have no love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." (1Cor 13, 1,2b)

And it gives me great pain thinking of the major problem of today is how to reveal the love of God, who became man in order to save all. Therefore this group of Christians is also among us, within the Church and in this pure room, so close to Christ and bright with His light. But its illuminating power has been diverted. It has been directed predominantly upon the law and awakens no life. And yet with this group as well a wonder can come true and the full light may break through.

And at this point our responsibility becomes evident. Words from the Song of Love regain topicality: "Love is patient and kind... it is not arrogant or rude." (1Cor 13:4a.5)



I am called upon to bring charity into the foreground and to realize it in the manner Christ gave us an example of: Love one another as I have loved you. And behold, Christ makes others and me as well responsible for its full radiance: You are to live according to my example. I am the centre and the fullness of the Church. My spirit is alive. It accepts you as my servants, it makes the salvation come true through you. My spirit is everywhere, but in the Church it has settled in all its abundance.

“You shall let the world see the truth: Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”(cf. Mt 18:20)

In this reflection my close connection with God becomes apparent. I am urged to prove and to live what God has revealed to me. In my foundation “Communio in Christo” God wants to realize his intentions once more. Out of this fundamental order emerges the mission to live the Church, no, to live Christ in our time. The Christians do not fully comprehend the reach of the salvation. They are part of the Church, but she has not become their home yet. Their wishes are focussed on things transient. But they, too, are on the journey to the kingdom of God. Christ, the salvation, is the Church, and He alone can be the way: “I am the way, the truth and the life; I am the light of the world.” We know where we are going on our pilgrimage: from the darkness to eternal life.

The Kingdom on earth is the Church, but not all of us live in her, not all are seriously searching for the kingdom of God, not all long for perfection. There are so many of us in the one faith, in the one Church. We are accompanied by others who do not have the great gift of faith and also by those who do not know where the road leads that Christ opened for us. There are many who set out on the way to God but follow a road that leads to an impasse because they feel they cannot endure being hampered. They do not want to go the stony path and to risk stumbling. They want the path to God to be smooth and without hard consequences.

In this reflection the word from the Scripture is so important: “Take up your cross and follow me!” Or David’s words where he says: “I keep the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also dwells secure. For thou dost not give me up to Sheol, or let thy godly one see the Pit. Thou dost show me the path of life; in thy presence there is fullness of joy, in thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.” (Ps 16:8-11)

This is where my responsibility becomes apparent and I ask myself: Do they have to continue living in this darkness and despair, missing their destination in quest of God? If we bear witness to the truth, we will be the radiant light on the path to perfection. The Church is to be life and hope for all. The testimony to her purity is the boundless love in which the light of Heaven rises like the sun in order to direct us to her origin. If only we could finally be true to the grace of our faith... the ruinous state of the world and the growing division in the Church would make the future visible to us!



The wish for unity is not strong enough to make man act. Love is the Church. Let us hear what John says: "Let us not love in word and speech but in deed and in truth."(1 Jn 3:18)

In the Church we bear responsibility for one another. The Church is the big edifice that has room for all of us, as it were, as one community united in the one love . And this love comes alive in our deeds. This community lives family and friendship. No, there must not be any distinction according to race or class. All shall be equal and look up to God. I am longing for a Church in which all men live the same love.

Be praised, kingdom of God here on earth!  
 Glory to you, from whom the heavenly gifts are streaming.  
 Praise to you, o holy Church,  
 in which Christ is so near to us.  
 I praise you, Sun of Heaven,  
 Trailblazer for my salvation.  
 I praise you, holy town,  
 in which the countenance of the earth is permanently renewing itself.  
 O path of love,  
 on which Christ comes within our reach.  
 Hallowed be your name,  
 rising high above the roofs of towns and villages  
 to point to eternity.  
 Praise to you, holy Church,  
 in which the truth cannot possibly mix with lie.  
 Praise to you, o vigilant Church,  
 continuously endeavouring  
 to let grow and ripen  
 what is still hidden.  
 O holy Church, whose kingdom is not of this world,  
 the life-supporting signs in your innermost heart  
 grant me the gift of truth,  
 so that my life may bring to bloom  
 what had been hidden.  
 O Church, eternal bliss,  
 glory be given you in all eternity.



## COMMENTARY

### Planting Seeds of Hope

**By Rev. Fr. Raphael Banda from Zambia**

The world has so many stories, real life events, about so many people who are living life that has no hope for the future. There are many stories world over that spell out hopelessness. Some of those stories include: the current stories of wars in some parts of world, the killings of young people in Central Africa, cutting of aid by some state and non-state agencies to needy people, the prescience of disease and sickness against rising costs of health insurance and lack of love in families and among friends.

Mother Marie Therese looking at the challenges of her time spoke (wrote) prophetically by pointing to Jesus Christs as the source of hope in the face of such challenges. She further saw that the Church is a way to Jesus Christ. She believed strongly that the Church can inspire hope to those who are hopeless. This is possible because of the incarnation of Jesus Christ present in the church.

She believed that by collaboration, solidarity and synodality of the hierarchy and the laity, the Church can be an assurance of hope. She also believed that in times of crisis, the church is a home to the homeless. The church can also create space or be that space where dreams are realized. Her own dream of founding a religious “order” was to be realized in the church.

In her mind it was clear that the Church by her efforts to be a sacrament of hope has suffered a mistaken identity where it is seen as a political voice instead of being seen as a prophetic voice speaking for the vulnerable that are hopeless in the face of political power and political institutions.

She urged that the church should be seen as an intercessor and an institution of pastoral charity imitating the master Jesus Christ.

By my few years of working in secondary schools, both boarding and day schools, as a teacher, chaplain and administrator, I remain humbled that the school does not deal with people without hope, but rather with learners and staff who have high hopes for a brighter future. Therefore the task of teachers, chaplains and administrators is to accompany learners and staff so that they have a breakthrough in what they hope. A school therefore is place where seeds of hope are planted, nurtured, protected.

Therefore in such an environment as part of school staff our task is to accompany, namely to acquire good education that would see them through to university.



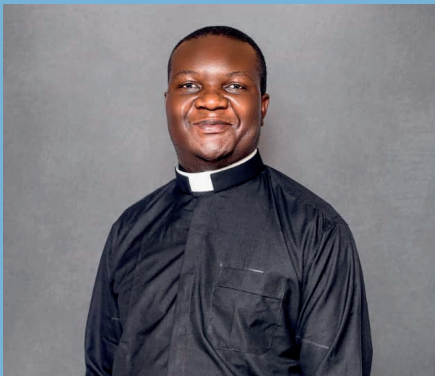
In a school environment, there are many things that affect the hope of learners. These may include substance abuse, family conflict which often times result into defiant behaviour and naivety of teenage to mention but a few.

In the face of such happenings we make sure that our school, as part of the Church, is a place where many groups of people realize their hopes, both learners and staff. For learners, we endeavor to identify and work more closely with those who exhibit personal deficiencies in cognitive capacities and social interactions. We do this by offering supervision and guidance that prevent them from potential harm. In the same way the school inclines its ear to the needs of the staff and journey with them on challenges they may need to take up.

As an associate of *Communio in Christo* by heart, I get encouragement from the long standing members that have kept and fought for this institution from the days of Mother Marie Therese, every day keeping nurturing and protecting the seed of hope for a world-wide community of priests, religious and laity united in Christ and reaching out to others in works of Charity.

Reflecting on the life of Mother Marie Theresa and in line with the principles of education by Vatican II in *Gravissimum Educationis*, one thing I have emphasized in the school community is the imitation of Christ and humility in our service to one another. Therefore Holy mass is part of our school routine, sacraments of initiation (baptism, confirmation and the eucharist) have been celebrated for our learners and staff, and there is a huge sense of collaboration with parents especially pertaining to the growth and holistic development of learners. As pilgrims, not only in the area of education, we know that our hope is Christ and hope does not disappoint (Romans 5:5).

### Personal Introduction



Rev. Fr. Raphael Banda is a priest of the Archdiocese of Lusaka. He has served as a priest for 10 years. In the Last 10 years he served the church in different capacities: as Curate of Holy Spirit Parish in Lungwa, Katondwe, Vocations' Director for the Archdiocese of Lusaka, Parish Priest of Holy Saviour Parish in Kafue Estate and Parish Priest of St. Joseph Parish in Ngwerere. He has served as School Chaplain of St. Ambrose Boys Technical Secondary School where he is currently serving as an administrator in the capacity of deputy head teacher. He is an associate of *Communio in Christo* and in the summer of 2018 shared his life with the members of the Motherhouse in Germany – Mechernich.



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