

**ASPM**  
**Association in Support of the Little Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Redeemer**  
**Information letter 8 April 2019**

Dear Friends,

It is time to give you news, following on our last bulletin of **8<sup>th</sup> November 2018**, in which we told you that the Little Sisters of Mary, oppressed by the insupportable pressure exerted on them by the ecclesiastical authorities **had no other remedy but to ask, each Sister individually, to be released from their vows**. At the same time we are letting you know about our letter addressed to His Eminence, **Cardinal Joao BRAZ DE AVIS**, Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life, **in order to express our consternation and to inform him of what we are doing in support of the Little Sisters**.

In his reply of **20<sup>th</sup> November 2018**, the Dicastery told the Little Sisters that it did not want to pronounce upon their demand to be released from their vows, without first drawing to their attention the grave consequences which would result for each one of them. Let it be clear, at this point, that it was not without conscientious reflection on the grave consequences, that the Little Sisters had taken this step. But having regard to the position taken by the Dicastery, **how could they see any other peaceful way out of this situation?**

The same day, the Dicastery replied to the letter of 1<sup>st</sup> November from the Committee of the Association in Support of the Little Sisters. In that reply the Dicastery notably said, and we rejoice at this, their hope <<... **to bring back, as soon as possible, the Institute to its normal life, having respect for its own rule and its legitimate traditions** >>. Their reply specified, as well and most importantly, the **recognition** that the present situation has been, and we quote: << **provoked by undeniable difficulties encountered with the Ordinary competent for this Institute under Diocesan law**>>. *In other words, with the Bishop of Laval, Mgr Scherrer and we can add that those difficulties were in respect of questions over which he had no jurisdiction, since they had nothing to do with the life of the Institute*. Finally, in this letter, the Dicastery makes no further allusion to the problem of governance brought up at the beginning of this affair. **The investigations carried out by the Commissioners and the public testimony of each one of the Little Sisters (published on our website), have without doubt put an end to these false accusations.**

The Little Sisters rejoice that the Dicastery recognise, at last, that the real cause for this situation is founded upon << **the undeniable difficulties** >> **encountered with Mgr Scherrer**. They hope, now, that matters will be resolved, so that they can **once again follow their regular life**, as it seems that the authorities in Rome would also like to see this happen. In order to go forward in this way, they sent a new letter to the Dicastery, dated **12<sup>th</sup> December 2018**, simply putting forward their hopes and their proposals:

1. << ... **we believe that we can see, at last, the possibility of finding grounds for agreement and understanding; in that case, we would be overjoyed not to pursue our request for release from our vows, because we love our religious life, we love our Institute and we love the Church.**

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2. << ... we would hope to renew the dialogue with our own Bishop, Mgr Scherrer >>, after the appointment of a << **friendly conciliator** >> representing the Dicastery for Consecrated Life and another representing the Congregation for Bishops. This would allow for the putting in place of what is agreed and the restoring of confidence.
3. If this dialogue were not to be possible, the Little Sisters **simply ask that they should no longer be under the control of the Bishop of Laval, but under another Bishop ready to welcome them.**

Unfortunately, in their reply of **28<sup>th</sup> January 2019**, the Dicastery did not accept the proposal of the Little Sisters to organize a meeting with Bishop Scherrer, in order to take up again the dialogue. Once again the Little Sisters find themselves disappointed at this **incomprehensible position taken by the Dicastery which seems, now, to oppose the idea that the Sisters should be in contact with their Bishop**, in order to discuss and envisage their future... **Unless it is Mgr Scherrer, himself, who does not want it**, given that the Dicastery envisages **<<... to bring back, as soon as possible, the Institute to its normal life, having respect for its own rule and its legitimate traditions >>**. In effect, Mgr Scherrer, gave himself the mission of changing the way in which the Little Sisters live their charism, involving a decisive turn to modernism. Perhaps he has still not understood the way in which the Little Sisters are attached to their traditions? This aspect does not seem, however, to have stopped the Dicastery from telling the Sisters, in recent correspondence: **<< ... the idea that the ecclesiastical << authorities >> want to do harm to the Institutes which you call << classic >> is totally without foundation: in the Universal Church there exist many << classic >> religious Institutes, of which a good number are more so than you ...>>**.

In that same letter of **28<sup>th</sup> January 2019**, the Dicastery does not reply, either, to the suggestion of benevolent and objective << **friendly conciliator** >> asked for by the Little Sisters, nor did they respond to the suggestion of being under a different Bishop ready to welcome them. **In fact, in a simple response, they just propose to the Little Sisters, a meeting with a Bishop, a close friend of Mgr Scherrer, who has a professional relationship, on the other hand, with a member of Mgr Scherrer's family.**

This proposal by the Dicastery is quite out of step with that of the Little Sisters. In effect, the friendly ties between the two Bishops have been widely know for a long time. Without doubting the probity of this suggested conciliator, any conditions of independence, legitimately sought by the Little Sisters, are simply not there. In fact, this Bishop, friend of Mgr Scherrer, could rapidly find himself in a conflict of interest, incompatible with the mission given to him by the Dicastery, which would undoubtedly damage the effectiveness of his mediation.

Any person can easily see, that this proposal of the Dicastery does not correspond to the spirit of conciliation hoped for by the Little Sisters of Mary. That is why, **to their great regret**, in the absence of proper conditions, they have not wanted to meet this Bishop, **having regard to his close ties to Mgr Scherrer.**

**On the 9<sup>th</sup> February**, the Little Sisters replied in this sense to the Dicastery, asking, for the last time, as a meeting with Mgr Scherrer himself, seems impossible, to appoint a new conciliator, without any particular tie with the Bishop of Laval, whose objectivity and goodwill would not be in doubt. In default of this, in order to live their charism in serenity and confidence, they ask the Dicastery, **to favourably welcome their second proposal, above, which was to put them in the hands and under the protection of a Bishop who would have agreed to welcome them and approved by the Dicastery.**

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**We take the opportunity of this Bulletin to bring to your attention other important consequences of this conflict :**

*Not only does this conflict upset **the Congregation of the Little Sisters of Mary Mother of the Redeemer**, but it upsets, also, **all the spiritual family of Mother Mary of the Cross**. The Third Order (an Association of laypeople attached to the Institute) is going through a grave crisis following these events. **A group of members, have just sent an open letter to the President of the association, demanding his resignation**, following on his lack of discernment in this affair and his lack of support for the Little Sisters.*

*On the civil plane, the looming damage is not less, with a grave risk of equally upsetting the work of the Little Sisters. In effect, through an association of laypeople, they head up 4 establishments (Ehpad - Retirement homes) who **employ nearly 200 salaried personnel**. These establishments welcome not far short of **300 elderly people** happy to be able to find to find homes run on Gospel principles and to live their retirement peacefully, in accordance with their beliefs.*

*This continuing situation is disquieting on the social plane, because together with the communities of the Little Sisters it is their Ehpad (Retirement homes) which are also threatened, whether in the West, in Mayenne or in the region of Toulouse. One has to point out that that this work is **under the control of the ARS (Regional Health Authority) and Departmental Councils**. **The Association of the Little Sisters cannot do just what it likes in terms of management**. This relates to the initial litigation with Mgr Scherrer which dealt with a decision taken by him in agreement with ARS set out in a contract with them. This whole history risks undermining the credibility of the Association with ARS as to its capability to run these health establishments in a stable manner, whilst up to now the Association is recognised as exemplary in its management and in its adherence to the regulations.*

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Dear friends, we thank you once again for your support and we ask for your prayers for the Little Sisters of Mary Mother of the Redemption.

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***The Support Committee for the Little Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Redeemer***