

Greetings to each and every one of you.

It is a great joy for me to speak to you today as so many of you have come together for an intense experience on the occasion of the 2025 Jubilee. This Jubilee opens doors for everyone; it opens pathways for a future to build together in hope.

We just heard a passage from the Gospel of Saint Luke, and as I prepared this short talk for you, this is what stood out for me:

First of all, the reading from Isaiah proclaimed by Jesus in the synagogue: *"... He has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free"* (Lk 4:18).

Then, I was struck by Jesus' commentary on it: *"Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing"* (Lk 4:21).

What does the reading from Isaiah that we just heard say to us, Daughters of Charity, to you, young Vincentians who want to build your life not on shifting sand but on solid ground in order to be able over the years to withstand the inevitable winds, which some of you may already have to face?

Who are the poor, the captives, the blind, the oppressed? Daughters of Charity rub shoulders with them every day in the 97 countries where we have local communities. We have Sisters in Nicaragua where the situation continues to worsen, in Mauritania in the desert, in India with people infected with leprosy, in Nigeria where the Sisters are heavily involved in the service of children and youth afflicted by deafness... These are just a few examples.

It is in a close relationship with their brothers and sisters who suffer in one way or another that they experience genuine encounter with others, an experience of the presence of God. These encounters allow them to let God act in them and, as you sing, they can say, *"I give you my life to love others, and even if my strength fails, you will never fail me."*

God is patient. He waits without growing weary. Each person is unique in His eyes, and I refer back to the song: *"You call me by name," "Here I am, Jesus, in my weakness; you renew me on the journey; faith will sustain me."*

Personally, I can testify that God was very patient with me. It was in Haiti that I discovered prayer and deep poverty. I then decided to go to Cairo, Egypt, and in a very poor neighborhood, I met a community of Daughters of Charity for the first time. It would take me three years to recognize the Lord's call and for me to say "yes" to Him with all that I am, including my limitations. The journey had its ups and downs!

Since then, I try day after day to be faithful to Him and fully open to others. My life is no longer built on sand but on Christ. He taught me to live without fear of the waves and to recognize the simple joys of life. Yes, I am happy! This is my little secret to happiness that I share with you!

Let me go back to the Gospel reading.

After reading a passage from the prophet Isaiah, Jesus adds this commentary: *"Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."* He speaks to all of us today: baptized Christians, Daughters of Charity, young Vincentians or youth seeking meaning for their life.

Let us not forget that Jesus' words did not stop in Nazareth. When He said, *"Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing,"* this "today" extends to now, here, today.

It is up to all of us to hear the Good News, that which nourishes, soothes, heals and opens to the world, for we were created, not to be alone on an island, but to live and move forward together. We need each other, and we would be deluding ourselves to think otherwise.

Living in community is sometimes quite an adventure! However, I can testify to all that I have received in terms of friendship, support and encouragement. It is by no means a matter of us all being the same. Our differences are enriching, and I have come to understand this over time. Let us be united but remain who we are.

Jesus puts forward a sort of life program and calls workers to His harvest.

Who are the poor, the captives, the blind, the oppressed? They are there, but sometimes we do not see them: lonely people, elderly people, sick people or those who had to leave their country and their family, people experiencing homelessness, etc. How can we open our eyes? How can we not turn away from those who call?

You heard me a moment ago! I hesitated for three years before entering the Daughters of Charity. During all that time, I looked away, not from those who called, but especially from God's call! I closed my eyes and blocked my ears!

How can we open our eyes to those who call? Jesus' attitude and his way of looking at others should inspire us. He is above all attentive, not self-centered, and He looks on others with kindness, without judgement, trusting in people's capacity to get back their feet and also trusting in those who want to give their life.

During my visits in countries quite different from each other, for example, Cuba, Syria, Burundi, Vietnam, Ukraine and so many others, I marvel at the Sisters' passion for seeking out those who are the poorest, for finding the means for them to recover life, for them to be able to get back up on their feet and walk.

I also have the very simple memory of being in a center for disabled youth in Kosovo. They had organized a little party. I was so touched to see these youth whose body and mind are weakened by their disability and who, with this weakness, were able to pull off a well-prepared, joyful, beautiful moment. Welcoming was their only desire, their joy. What a lesson!

Their demeanor reflected love and shows what we can learn from those who are poor, captives, blind or oppressed. Saint Vincent often said that those who are poor teach us. What have you already learned from them?

I lived for 12 years in a local community in a very poor location north of Paris. I was a social worker, and I can tell you that I learned every day from the families whom I met. I was filled with wonder to see valiant mothers and the joy of children when they realized just how much potential they had.

Daughters of Charity give of themselves each day, with what they have and what they are, to fulfill this Scripture passage that we just heard, aware that they also have to come out of themselves in order to overcome their fears, limitations, uncertainties, resistances... in order to reach out to those whom society has left on the wayside.

Responding to calls of distress, wishing to remain faithful to the demands of the Gospel and fearlessly accepting difficulties cannot be done without God's help. This is why we gather together every day in the silence of prayer and meditation on the Word of God. Sometimes it seems almost natural, and then we are enthusiastic; other times, it is more complicated.

*I acknowledge that praying is not always easy, and some days I have the impression that I am like a bump on a log in the chapel! In that case, I ask myself, so where is God today?*

One day, the prophet Elijah understood that God was not in the windstorm, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the gentle breeze (Cf. 1 Kg 19:11-12). It took him time to understand this and to overcome trials and doubts.

Still today, God is not in the fire nor in special effects, but He does beckon, often subtly, without imposing Himself, through the loving gaze that He offers each individual personally.

He beckons to you, taking your desires and your personality into consideration, in order to indicate the direction of the path of fraternity and hope. God speaks to you with deep respect. But He questions you!

Where does He want you? How could He more fully become your companion on the journey? How can you find Him in your poorest brothers and sisters? How can you make your life a pilgrimage of hope, the hope that does not pass away and that is shared with those who desire it?

Have a good journey: God is waiting for you with open arms!

Sister Françoise Petit