

## WELCOME, EMBRACE, HOSPITALITY

To the two Congregations he formed in 1817, our Founder wrote:

“I have asked particularly for you  
that Jesus would send his Holy Spirit  
who enlightens, purifies and sanctifies,  
that he would make of you instruments of Mercy.”

Jesus Christ-yesterday, today and tomorrow  
Today comes from yesterday and prepares us for tomorrow.

In giving us this charism, our Founder challenges us to be present in the world today, looking toward tomorrow. He spoke as a prophet inviting us

- I. To live the charism of compassion, denouncing violence in all its forms and practising non-violence.
- II. To respect all of creation- very much in line with the movement today of respecting and returning to nature.
- III. To respect and be in harmony with ourselves.
- IV. To explore new frontiers, to discover new values.

These are ways to walk in compassion as seen in our General Chapter document of 1997

### Yesterday

The Founder saw the misery in Belgium in the nineteenth century; for the poor classes, neither education nor work. For centuries, Belgium had been the battlefield of Europe and was not to gain its independence until 1830.

Constant William Van Crombrugghe was twenty-eight years old when he began his work of education in 1817. His compassion jogged him into action and he founded the DMJS and the Josephites, giving them the charism of compassion.

How are we to live our charism today and prepare for tomorrow?

#### I. A Prophet Indeed

In order to live the charism of non-violence, I must have a spirit of non-violence and practise non-violence.

Non-violence has nothing to do with sentimentalism or wishful thinking. It cost Jesus, Gandhi, Martin Luther King and many others, known and unknown, their lives. Non-violence works for peace. Peace is God's gift- “Grant us peace” – but it also has to be

worked at. Violence bruises and breaks, “tears the body of Christ apart” (2 Cor. 5:18-19). Peace puts us onto the difficult road of reconciliation through forgiveness and welcome.

II. Respect for Creation

An ecologist before the word had even been invented, the Founder made sure that there were trees and flowers in the gardens and among these was the gingko which is used as a healing herb.

He loved walking, often going on foot from one convent to another.

III. Respecting Oneself

“Compassion is being at one with oneself.”

Through his teaching he invited people to do away with sadness”, which dries up the bones”, to love joy and always to have “an open and pleasant bearing”.

\*self-love with no mollycoddling!

\*the avoidance of negative thinking and the cultivation of whatever is positive.

IV. “Always be Ahead of the Times”

The Founder turned to new horizons. In a very short space of time he was sending DMJS out of Belgium to foreign soil.

He pointed us to different kinds of values:

-Eastern mysticism and compassion

-Ecumenism

-Last, but not least, the scientific discoveries of our times.

One year after the first foundations, the Founder was writing to the DMJS and the Josephites: “I am more and more convinced that you are destined to become instruments of mercy in the Church of Jesus Christ.”

Today he would be writing “...instruments of compassion in the world”.

Right from the beginning of human history, God has desired that there be upon the earth hearts burning with compassion. Let us DMJs, be counted among those with hearts such as these.

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