



**To the very reverend
Sr M Viviana BALLARIN o.p.
Prioress General
and to the General Council
of the Dominican Sisters of St Catherine of Siena**

My dearest Sisters,

It is with deep joy that I respond to the request for aggregation to the Order of Friars Preachers addressed to me in the name of the whole Congregation by Sr M. Viviana BALLARIN o.p., Prioress General, and the General Council on the day of the Solemnity of St Catherine of Siena. (Prot. n. 72/2009)

That which at first glance would seem to be a merely formal and juridical act, I would desire to be an authentic and living act of thanksgiving, of faith, and of abandonment; and I am certain that this interprets your own feelings and desires.

Since 1885 we have lived and collaborated in the Order, in the Church and in the world in the service of that specific mission of the Order of Preachers which Catherine herself well summed up: to continue the mission of the Word.

It was from this perspective that I allowed myself to affirm (above) that the juridical union of the two ex-Congregations of Albi and Rome, already aggregated to the Order under the jurisdiction of the Master of the Order Joseph Larroca o.p., and the consequent request of the *new* Congregation, might seem to be a mere formality.

But it is not right that it should be a formality.

It is for us to make it a deeply vital act which expresses itself first of all as an act of thanksgiving. If everything which comes down from the Father is gift, why should we not thank him together for everything in our lives that we have been given, and, in our turn, have been able to give, during all these years?

But your request, and the Order's acceptance, is also a renewal of the sense of mutual trust. We recognise our brothers and sisters under a new title because all have been called by the Spirit who animated Dominic; and following Paul's invitation (cf Rm 12:10) we want, in love, to continue to honour each other, delighting in the action of the same Spirit.

The times in which we are living, when we are engaged with the new responsibilities and services offered by the increasingly numerous means of communication, and our ever deeper recognition that we are a Dominican Family, make it imperative for us to abandon ourselves as docile instruments of the provident action of the Father, given that brothers and sisters who work together are the best testimony to the presence of the Risen One among us. This, in itself, is an apostolic activity which is very significant today.

**With the consent of the General Council
I accede to your request for aggregation into
the Order of Preachers (CIC can. 580)**

At this time I am happy to emphasise the importance of the General Chapter for which you are readying yourselves: having prepared with care, you may celebrate it in the joy of mutual listening, and in courageous decisions that will be useful for your service in the Church.

I am praying for you: through your desire to be ever more attuned to his Spirit may the Lord guide you to that renewal which will enable you to *discern the will of God, that which is good and acceptable to him and perfect* (Rm.12:2), and in him to be able to bring it all to fulfilment.

May Mary, most holy, our holy Father St Dominic and St Catherine pray for us.
Rome, Santa Sabina, 24 June 2009, Solemnity of St John the Baptist

