



*Like a grain of mustard*



200th Anniversary of the birth of Mother Bernarda  
November 26, 1822 - November 26, 2022

Dear Sister,

During this time when the feast of the birth of Mother Bernarda is approaching, in listening to the Word and meditating it, I wondered which biblical image best expressed her style of life and mission, in order to be able once again to draw energy and inspiration.

And behold, a gospel meditated on in these days has offered me a precious and profound image: **the mustard seed**. It is the smallest of all seeds but once placed in the earth of the garden, this seed becomes capable of generating a large tree; on its branches the birds build nests and come to rest. (cfr Mt 13:31-32, Mk 4:30-32, Lk 13:18-19)

Mother Bernarda's whole life **was animated** by the logic of the small mustard seed and she **was oriented** towards planting this seed in the "garden" of the world, to make the Kingdom of God grow.

Like a small grain of mustard, offering all of herself, she has in fact generated a Religious Family which is currently working on various Continents to promote life and offer people a place in which to be educated and grow. How beautiful this miracle of life that comes from the courage of a small seed!

### ***Mother Bernarda, animated by the logic of the small mustard seed***

A quality that has always accompanied Mother Bernarda's style of thought and choice has been **smallness**. Reading the chronicles, the texts that comment on her life and the letters written to her sisters, her sobriety and her depth emerge clearly.

Littleness can be seen in her as the acknowledgment that we are fragile creatures but deeply loved by God. It is for this reason that she invited the sisters to "*expect much, above all from God*", always tending towards the essentials of human and spiritual life: to what really matters and must be guarded with patience and courage. She was certain that God knows what each person needs and what is their true worth. The Providence of God would never have abandoned her Good Work but rather would have brought it to completion (Phil 1:6)

Taking care of her personal relationship with God was for Mother Bernarda the foundation of everything. From this relationship everything began and everything came to bear fruit. In this context, "emptying" herself and all that is superfluous - like the seed empties itself to generate roots and produce the sprout - became for her the sacred space for God because *"God finds his home where He finds empty vessels and cleanse yourself"*.

This can happen if you care about the spaces of silence like the farmer in the Gospel who sows in silence, without commenting, but trusting in the hidden power of the seed that is falling into the ground. In the relationship with God we recognize ourselves as small, we accept our own vulnerability and we become humble servants of his Kingdom, with that potential that God has placed in us. (Lk 17:10)

### *Let us ask ourselves in our spaces of silence*

- ~ *What logic am I following in this period of my life? The "little mustard seed" logic of the Kingdom of God or the logic of my Ego?*
- ~ *Do we know how to find spaces of silence every day to nourish this sense of the Presence of God who dwells in us and acts in us?*

### *Mother Bernarda oriented to make the Kingdom of God grow*

I like to read every time in texts about Mother Bernarda and the first two sisters that they were happy and thanked God for having been called to educate. For this mission they were convinced that every sacrifice was worth making.

The mission to which Mother Bernarda and the first sisters felt called was clear and accompanied by deep gratitude. Mother Bernarda was happy to be able to proclaim the Gospel through education!

She has never aspired to great things, dispersing herself in a thousand activities, but she was committed to promoting small concrete steps faithful to the call received. Prayer, discernment, dialogue with her

sisters and with the Church, allowed her to patiently accompany the sowing of the charism received in the society of her time. They helped her to wait for its sprouting and to take care of it so that the bad weather did not destroy it. Like the farmer who confidently sowed the seed, she waited, because, day and night, God would have paid attention to His Work and would have carried it forward (cfr Mk 4:26-29). And so it happened and is happening!

Celebrating the anniversary of the birth of Mother Bernarda therefore invites us to contemplate more deeply the potential present in our spirituality and in our charism as Sisters of the Holy Cross. It's a huge potential! We are aware of the fragility and precariousness that is going through our Congregation and the world in which we live; however, like Mother Bernarda we can rejoice in having been called by God to confidently place that "little mustard seed" of her Word in every person we meet.

Dear Sister, every day, with humility and gratuitousness, we can continue to be *Sowers of small seeds of the Gospel*, where we are, with who we are, starting from formation. It is the Gospel that shapes and has the power to transform our lives and the lives of those we meet! Indeed, God knows human reality and knows how to bring it to light!

May Mother Bernarda, after these 200 years of history, rejoice in the fruits generated in us and in the world, thanks to that "little mustard seed" which she welcomed and sowed with love, until the end....

*Blessed and fruitful Anniversary!*

*Sr Dorina*

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Congregational Leader