



*Listen.
Behold, the Sower
went out
to sow His seed*

Mark 4,3

Dearest Sister,

I am sure that you have read and pondered the Parable of the Sower many times. It is a very significant parable that can surprise us every time we meditate on it. In this letter I wish to stop with you to reflect precisely on the first sentence of the Parable: "Listen. Behold, the Sower went out to sow His seed" (Mk 4: 3). In this Gospel sentence I found a lot of harmony with Mother Bernarda's lifestyle, especially regarding three words: *Sower, Going out, Seed.*

Sower

Jesus defines God as the Sower. Not as any ordinary sower but as THE Sower, as if He were unique. It is a wonderful definition because it embodies the desire to generate life. This image also has a strong sense of hope, because those who sow always hope that the seed sown will sprout and mature. The Sower does not give up sowing because he trusts in that benevolent mystery of Providence that always accompanies the earth and the life of every living being. (cf. Mk 4: 26-27) He does not judge anything. He sows generously and freely, even though he knows that not all land will be "good soil". He sows without calculations or pretensions...

Go out

The Sower went out ... To go out: it is a very significant movement not only from a physical point of view but also from an existential point of view. The Sower goes out in order to carry out his mission. He does not sit in the comforts of his home but goes where the ground is, whatever it is. Let's try to think about the meaning of going out in the Bible: Abraham came out of his land; the people of Israel came out of Egyptian slavery. The Son of God came out of the Father's bosom. The disciples are invited to leave the narrow borders of Israel to take the Gospel to the whole world. Every true "going out" is born from a call from God and leads to a change of life and mentality.

The seed

Jesus explains the Parable by saying that the seed is the Word of God. God sows His Word. A Word that generates life, in every

terrain, even when it is then overwhelmed by the unfavourable conditions of the terrain. The Word is thrown everywhere, even in those areas or in those people from whom, unjustly, we no longer expect anything. We will never understand enough how generously God gives us His Word and how much transformative power the Word, we meditate every day, carries within Him!

Sower of the Gospel

In Mother Bernarda we can find precisely this style of God who broadly sows the Word of God to make the life of humanity a new life. She did not limit herself only to tending the soil of the society in which she lived, but she brought the seeds of a Christian education into society. He knew that within those seeds, welcomed by the women and children she met in the village schools, there was the possibility of sprouting a new lifestyle, less corrupted by the ideologies of the time and more enlightened by faith in God. She looked at people without categorizing them in "good soil" or "bad soil": it offered everyone a chance to improve their life and social condition. She believed in the potential for good present in every person.

Like the Sower, Mother Bernarda came out of the mentality of her time that wished to relegate all consecrated women to cloistered convents. She came out of those interpersonal reasoning and dynamics that did not favour communion between the sisters and fidelity to the mission among the people. She came out of the temptation to seek personal success at any cost to remain a humble instrument in the hands of God at the service of her work.

With her life she offered *the seed of the Gospel* to the Congregation and to the people of society. She did not offer simple human skills or exalted her personal talents, but through her abilities she always and in spite of everything chose to form responsible Christian citizens and *sisters deeply rooted in Christ, capable of being a transforming presence* (CG 2019)

Celebrating with joy the 200th anniversary of Mother Bernarda let us ask ourselves sincerely: *Do we know how to be Sowers of the Gospel with our gestures and our words "of our soil" in the communities, in our societies and of the mission that has been entrusted to us? Do we have gazes capable of seeing in others what is good and can still come to light?*

A seed of new life in Europe

Trusting in the generosity of the Sower and through the intercession of Mother Bernarda, I invite all of us to rejoice in a new sprout that is coming to light in Europe. Towards the end of this year the Sisters of the Holy Cross in England will become "**House England**" with a **new style of Leadership: Covenant Leadership**. By treasuring the biblical image of the **Covenant**, described in the Exodus - where God walks alongside his people - the sisters from England desired to collaborate with a sister from another European Province willing to share their journey and their responsibilities. The sister appointed by the Congregational Leadership after having consulted the sisters of the English Province, is SR MANUELA KOLLMANNBERGER, of the German Province. The new style of collaboration between these two Provinces of Europe is a very beautiful sign and is starting precisely in the year in which the Church invites us to reflect and promote synodality.

I sincerely thank the Sisters of the Province of England and the Province of Germany for having had the courage to "go out" of their borders, trusting each other. May the good Lord, who always sows with breadth and generosity in every time and place, accompany the growth of this sprout of life.

To you, dearest Sister, I express my gratitude for every time we try to live and sow the Gospel together, without prejudice and with trust. It is the only sense of our presence and our mission!

May Jesus live in our hearts

sr. Dorina

Congregational Leader