

## ***SHEPHERD THE WAY: NEW ERA IS DAWNING***

***“I would repeat thousand times, be grateful to God.  
May your heart be an altar from which a bright flame of  
unending thanksgiving ascends to heaven” SME***

This is a very fitting moment of Grace, for the Province of Sri Lanka/Pakistan, to pour out to God, torrents of the deep, heart-felt sentiments of Gratitude and Love that gush forth from the hearts of all the members of the large Good Shepherd Family – sisters and lay mission partners, because “Our hearts are created to love and to be grateful” says St. Mary Euphrasia.

### **Dream of St. Mary Euphrasia: (Light the Paschal Candle while the hymn is being played)**

She heard a song a song unsung  
Her dreams were wide far beyond the sun  
She saw a world far from her shore  
She heard the cries of the lost and poor

***You are the song, Shepherd God and friend  
Your invitation knows no bounds or end  
Persuasive love moving hearts and minds  
We'll sing your song in these changing times***

More women came they heard the call  
To give their lives to the lost and poor  
The word went round spread through the land  
And crossed the sea into other lands

The years have passed, fresh winds are blowing  
Through storms and calm other seeds need sowing  
New visions stir amidst the fear  
Song without end open us to hear

By Sr. Sharon FitzGerald RGS

Soft music..... (Read the following reflectively)

### **An invitation to re-live or imagine first land marks of Good Shepherd sisters in Sri Lanka.....**

St. Mary Euphrasia, before she entered eternal bliss had already dreamt and aspired the Good Shepherd foundation in Sri Lanka. ....

### *The journey of our pioneers...*

It has been recorded that the four Sister Pioneers after some months journeyed by ship “*arrived at the Galle Harbour, in the south of Ceylon, from where they travelled to Colombo by horse-carriage. They were first welcomed by the Bishop of Colombo, Monsignor Hilarian Sillani O.S.B., at Philip Neri’s Church in Pettah. A procession of carriages and people on foot led them through gaily decorated streets, while music and dancing heralded their arrival to St. Lucia’s Church*”, which is the present Cathedral in Kotahena.

Journeying along Memory Lane, 150 years backwards, one cannot but be amazed with gratitude for the rich and precious Heritage of our Province. Embedded with the Good Shepherd charism and mission how we have touched the hearts of the poor, unloved, marginalized, wounded women, girls and children in society. (Sisters are free to recall and share their unique mission experiences...)

### **Expression of Gratitude...**

“Gratitude is your inheritance; engrave it on your heart.” (SME) We possess a legacy of divine mission of the Good Shepherd for 150 years in the soil of Sri Lanka. We are here today with these precious memories of the Good Shepherd presence among the people of Sri Lanka. What can we say to God today? The only sentiments we can express in the simplicity of our hearts is to say “we are ever grateful” – Yes, indeed we are very grateful to you O God!

The gratefulness is an inner gratitude that spring forth from our hearts, and the core of our being. Whenever we are truly awake and alive we are truly grateful. Gratefulness is the heart of prayer. Indeed we are grateful to God for His Divine Power within us which moved us forward to reach this milestone in our history. We are grateful to all our pioneers – sisters and lay on whose shoulders we stand in communion today.

### *Psalm of gratitude..... (All)*

May the Great Birther who created us in wholeness,  
comfort us when we call!

May the Name of Love be our protection  
And rise up in our hearts as a tower of strength!

May all we have given in gratitude and with open hands,  
Be returned to us hundredfold!  
May our hearts desires and all of Love’s plans for us  
Be fulfilled in due season!

Let us shout for joy as Love triumphs over fear;  
Let our thankful hearts sing in loud acclamation to the Lord,  
Who answers our heartfelt prayers for well-being!

## **At the threshold of a new era...**

Today we stand at the threshold of a new era as religious of the Good Shepherd. Everything in this cosmos is unfolding and revealing something new. For us as a nation of a beautiful island and as human beings of the universe, the realities of the world today speak to us powerfully of refounding the charism. Let us take a moment to reflect on this in the light of the Word God.

### ***Scripture reading Is. 61: 1-3 (Luke 4: 18-19)***

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion— to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory. (Pause)

### ***Reflection...***

In the Bible, the "Jubilee Year" was an important event. At the beginning it was necessary to restore the land to the clan of origin. (Dt 15:1; Lev 25:3) All had to be able to return to their own property; and this way they prevented the formation of large estates, and families were guaranteed their livelihood. It was also necessary to forgive their debts and to redeem the people who were slaves. (Dt 15:1-18). The objective of the Jubilee was and continues to be, to re-establish the rights of the poor, to accept the excluded and to re-integrate them into the society to live together with others. The Jubilee was a legal instrument to return to the original sense of the Law of God.

Jesus begins His preaching proclaiming a Jubilee: "A year of grace from the Lord." This text is an image of the situation of the people of Galilee at the time of Jesus. The experience which Jesus had of God, the Father of Love, gave Him a new perspective to evaluate the reality. Jesus' vision was 'wholistic' which is a promise of both pastoral and prophetic restoration. It is a call for a radical change. In His passionate love Jesus takes a stand to defend the life of His people and, with the words of Isaiah, He defines His mission.

Yes, it is a time to question, we are called to question, it is a time to search... search deep within oneself. Let us be daring disciples of Jesus and authentic followers of St. Mary Euphrasia and St. John Eudes by being courageous enough to question ourselves and challenge ourselves.

- ***Where are we as Disciples of Christ – individually and communally? (Pause)***
- ***Where is my passion drawing me or leading me? (Pause)***

Let the Divine power stir within me, wake me up, move me forward and help me to search the purpose of my existence as a religious of Good Shepherd in the universe. In our journey together we envision zeal in an evolutionary universe for a greater Love – Christ consciousness in us individually and communally.

***Hymn: The World stands in need of liberation my Lord. (PN new 357)***

(Each sister gets her candle lit from the paschal candle and prayerfully recites the psalm blessing)

***Psalm of blessing (all)***

May God bless us in our searching and our questions.

They are the gateway to wisdom, enlightenment and peace,  
The way to our hearts.

May God bless us in our gifts.

These are God's providence to the world  
to enable to bring it love

May God bless us in the yearnings of our hearts.

No matter how subtle, they are energy,  
urging us forward  
in our quest for God and for others.

May God bless us in our vision.

No matter the climb, it is a mountain peak,  
calling us to experience God.

May God bless us in our leadership.

That we may witness to the Word,  
Word that is searched and contemplated,  
professed and proclaimed.

May God bless us in our decisions.

No matter the mistakes, they are our "Yes" to life,  
Our assent to the field where God is to be found

May God bless us in our reflection and our ideas.

No matter the doubts,  
they are the seeds seeking nourishment,  
sunshine, life giving water.

May God bless us in all our ways,

source of all being,  
eternal word Holy Spirit - Amen

***Final Hymn: Carry your candle run to the darkness***