



Presentation of the theme: **EPHATA**

Sister Françoise Petit

In September 2018, the members of the General Council met to choose the phrase from the Gospel that would serve as a springboard for the Assemblies. As is the case every six years, we wanted to give a powerful dynamic, a momentum, but one that corresponds to today's needs.

We already had the essential subjects to address because during the Visitatrices' Inter-Assemblies Meeting in May 2018, they had expressed what they felt was important for the Company. The following topics came out, almost unanimously: communion, solidarity, justice, communication, care for our common home and, above all, the culture of encounter. These suggestions as a whole led us to prioritize encounter, an encounter focused on mission.

One Sunday in that month of September 2018, the liturgy inspired us with the passage from the Gospel of Mark 7:31-37 and Jesus' invitation: "*Ephata, be opened.*" In prayer and reflection, we all felt that the Spirit had spoken and guided us to this Word with so much life. This is how Ephata became a call for the entire Company in all the local communities and Provinces, a call to open hearts and minds: to open to God, to our brothers and sisters around us and to our Sisters in community.

From the beginning, this call has been heard in the Company; it is just the words that have changed. If we look at the last two Assemblies, "Open to the Transforming Spirit" and then "The Boldness of Charity for a New Missionary Momentum," Ephata represents continuity yet with specificities tied to our unsettled time. Fidelity and creativity are the two driving forces of the Company, and we can give thanks for this.

The situation has changed significantly since September 2018. The world has turned us upside down. How can we live Ephata in a period of lockdown, when borders closed, when trips even within a country were forbidden, for us, a Company precisely without borders? A

lockdown for the Daughters of Charity who, by their vocation, have for cloister the streets of the city!

Nonetheless, in all the Provinces, you met this challenge and continued with even more determination to open yourselves in one way or another.

This is because Ephata concerns all the dimensions of our life. Ephata is first and foremost welcoming the One who is the source of all, who sends us as He sent His disciples.

Then, there are interior Ephatas, Ephatas in perspective, in relationships, geographic Ephatas, Ephatas that impel us to conversion, missionary Ephatas.

In 2019, Pope Francis expressed so well the meaning that we wanted to give to this Assemblies process. I will read the quote, which I think you know:

“People in love never stand still: they are drawn out of themselves; they are attracted and attract others in turn; they give themselves to others and build relationships that are life-giving” (Pope Francis, Message for World Mission Day 2019).

Now, I am going to give the floor to Sister Monica, originally from the Province of Nigeria. She will illustrate my words and give a testimony on her Ephata, that which was asked of her when she left her Province to come serve at the Mother House.