

Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice  
**BIENNIAL ASSEMBLY 2022**  
September 11 - 17  
KRAKÓW

**Sisters Danat Marie Brysch, Minister General**  
**Opening remarks**

As we gather here in this beautiful city of Krakow, which holds not only the history of Poland but the beginnings of our Felician Congregation, we certainly do not need to remind ourselves that we are here together during a time of rapid historical change. Many of the changes in our Congregation, the Church, and our countries serve to make us uncomfortable, to cause us to wonder where it is all leading and what is our role in it all as Felician Sisters trying to live out God's dream that was passed on to us through Blessed Mary Angela.

During my retreat this summer, the retreat master gave us an article to read by Timothy Radcliffe, the noted Dominican leader and writer. The article was entitled "*What are you here for?*" Although Fr. Radcliffe was prompted to write this by his need to reflect on his own life as he turned 75, his reflection can be applied not only to any one of us but also to us as a Congregation.

He wrote from the vantage point of the story of Elijah the prophet in the First Book of Kings. Elijah has come to Mount Horeb. He had just successfully destroyed the prophets of Baal, proclaiming a victory for the God of Israel, and of course incurring the wrath of Jezebel who has just given orders to have him killed. After a long, arduous journey, he staggers to the Mount of God seeking God's help. Alone on the mountain, Elijah is confronted by the question from God, "What are you here for?" (It can be noted that although some translations write "What are you *doing* here?" it seems that "What are you here for?" is closer to the Hebrew. There is no reference to *doing*, it is more a matter of *being*.)

Elijah thinks he knows the answer. He says, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts, but the Israelites have forsaken your covenant. They have destroyed your altars and murdered your prophets. I alone am left, and they seek to take my life." I, I, I. It's all about *him*. He thinks it is time for God to pull His weight in the Elijah story. But God disrupts his narrative. The Lord spends no time sympathizing with Elijah. In fact, He poses the same question a second time and gets the same answer. God then immediately commands Elijah to set out and continue playing his part in a story that is, after all, not primarily about him. He must go and anoint the king of Syria and the king of Israel. And—he must anoint his successor. He is about to be replaced! And it is simply not true that he alone has been faithful. God notes seven thousand other Israelites who have remained faithful.

Of course, Elijah had a pivotal role to play in the history of salvation, but that role did not revolve around himself. The role, as all our roles should, revolved around God and His plan for us and the world.

So, this brings us to our considerations regarding our General Chapter. We can ask ourselves the question, “What are we here for?” Part of our answer is in our theme, “The love of Christ impels us.” We are, or always should be, faithful to discerning and living out what it is that God is urging us to be. Another answer lies in the Church’s current impulse toward synodality. We are to live out our journey of faithfulness with others who are on the road with us. During this year’s assembly of the Union of International Superiors General, Nurya Martinez-Gayol, a Sister of the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Heart of Jesus described synodality as a way of living and acting that defines the ecclesial community in its relationships *ad intra* and *ad extra*. The etymological meaning of the word synod allows us to understand it as “walking together.” Therefore, what we are beginning as we prepare for the Chapters at the various levels is a renewed look at where and to whom God may be calling us. As we look at this together regarding our communal and apostolic life, we must always also keep ourselves open to discern with whom we are being called to travel on our journey as Felician Sisters. As Pope Francis has stated regarding the synodal process, we “belong to a people walking, journeying through history together with their Lord who walks among us! We are not alone; we do not walk alone. We are part of the one flock of Christ that walks together.”

So, Sisters, both our *doing* and our *being* are found in Christ whose love impels us. It is good for us to be here with one another and for one another! And we can always rejoice that Mary, Christ’s mother and ours, continually walks with us.