

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY MARCH 8, 2025



On this day, a cry for full equality between men and women echoes through the streets of cities around the world: a cry that denounces the suffering and injustice that women endure simply for being born women... Each one of us can name this suffering and injustice because we have accompanied other women who have lived through it or because we have experienced it ourselves.

As the Claretian Family, we join together this March 8th to celebrate **International Women's Day** under the theme: ***“For ALL women and girls: Rights, Equality, Empowerment”***.

As long as this pain and cry exist, celebrating Women's Day will have meaning... Let us renew our compassionate listening to this cry, while we all, in the mission entrusted to us, work to transform our attitudes and ways of relating to one another.

The Synod has also highlighted the situation of discrimination that women face in the Church, while calling for greater levels of participation and decision-making for women, with the desire to more fully express

Jesus' call to build the Kingdom from the diversity of gifts we have received.

RECOGNIZING the women who have been and are part of our lives

We invite you to look back at your history and recognize the impact and the mark left by the women who have passed through your life. **In silence**, name them, thank them for the good they have done for you, their inspiration, and courage. Remember the women in your family, your friends or acquaintances, sisters, and companions in mission.

Silence.

SONG: Depending on the place, an appropriate song can be chosen for this moment. Suggested:

English language: **One Voice**, de Sarah Thomsen : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9zk8FmCdleY>

Spanish language: **Mujeres en camino**, de Ain Karem: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1l9RnH6AYaw>

LISTENING TO THE WORD: Many women have accompanied us throughout our lives, they accompany us today, and many others will accompany us in the future... In the text we will read next, it is striking how many women Paul mentions, women who have helped him greatly in his mission, and whom he makes visible to the community of the Romans.

Rom 16, 1-4; 6-7; 12- 16

"I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me.

Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.

Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you. Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was. Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord.

Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too. Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the other brothers and sisters with them. Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the Lord's people who are with them. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings".

We rest the Word in our hearts...



LISTENING TO MARÍA ANTONIA PARÍS:

*"May the light of the Holy Spirit guide my pen to write with clarity what God our Lord has ordered me several times and now again orders me by means of Holy Obedience... **I cannot remain silent, and to speak is temerity.** Supposing then my God, that you order me to do so, I will speak so that those who will read it will magnify your works, Lord..."¹*

***"If I were a person of authority, it seems to me that at this moment I would not be able to hold back the pen to write to all the Fathers and Pastors of the Church, communicating to them that ray of evangelical light that with its clarity and force disperses the thick fog that has their eyes so covered... I the Pastors of his Church do not measure their works with the compass of the Gospel."**²*

¹ MAP, Plan for the Renewal, n.1, p.309.

² MAP, Plan for the Renewal, n.54, p.329.

*“According to her contemporaries, our first Mother **did not want us to be delicate and pampered; she taught and educated us to be like oak trees in the wild, not flowers in a garden.** She wanted great and strong souls, and she would say: Sisters, let us be generous with the Lord and not hold back anything.”³*

Silence to internalize what has been heard.

LET’S LISTEN TO OUR REALITY:⁴



2025 is a crucial year for the global pursuit of gender equality and women's empowerment, as it marks the 30th anniversary of the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**.

In 1995, 189 governments adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action during the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, China. This document remains the most progressive and endorsed action plan for advancing the rights of women and girls worldwide. The Platform lays the foundation for policies, programs, and investments that impact key areas of our lives, such as education, health, peace, media, political participation, economic empowerment, and the elimination of violence against women and girls. Addressing these issues and the priorities that arise in relation to climate justice and the power of digital technologies is urgent, as we are only five years away from the deadline to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in these years, has transformed the agenda for women's rights. Let's take a look:

Access to Services: The Beijing Platform for Action calls for basic services such as shelters, legal counseling, guidance, and medical services for survivors of violence. These services have expanded worldwide, providing crucial life-saving support to countless women and girls.

Legal Protection: Before 1995, only 12 countries had legal sanctions against domestic violence. Today, there are 1,583 legislative measures in place across 193 countries, including 354 that specifically address domestic violence. These laws are the visible face of the collective rejection of abuse and impunity.

³ Testimony of the Sisters Teresa Porta de San Tadeo and Úrsula Viñas de San Matías, Gen. Arch. RMI, AB 4.3 bis.

⁴ Cfr. UN WOMEN Website, Report 2025.

Youth Participation: The Beijing Agenda inspired a new wave of young feminists who today form movements for gender justice, leverage digital platforms, and drive activism for equality.

Changes in Social Norms: The agreement reached at the Fourth World Conference on Women inspired women's rights movements worldwide, as it combats stereotypes, harmful ideas and practices, and lays the foundation for policies, laws, and institutions with gender equality.

Women's Participation in Peacebuilding: The Beijing Platform for Action emphasizes the need to increase women's full and equal participation at all levels of conflict prevention and resolution, including decision-making. Today, 112 countries have National Action Plans on women, peace, and security, a significant increase compared to just 19 in 2010. These National Action Plans have been crucial in facilitating women's participation in peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery, enabling their access to decision-making positions and laying the groundwork for the enactment of new laws regarding sexual violence during conflicts.

Despite significant progress, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action marks its 30th anniversary in a context of growing insecurity and accumulated crises, leading to increasing distrust in democracy, reduced civic participation, and erosion of Human Rights. In the past year alone, **612 million women and girls lived in the brutal reality of armed conflict**, representing a concerning 50 percent increase over the past decade. For all these reasons, decisions will need to be made in three key areas:

- 1. PROMOTING THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS.** Fight relentlessly for the broad range of human rights of women and girls against all forms of violence, discrimination, and exploitation.
- 2. PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY.** Address systemic barriers, dismantle patriarchy, transform deep-rooted inequalities, and elevate the voices of marginalized women and girls, including young women, to ensure inclusion and empowerment.
- 3. DRIVING EMPOWERMENT.** Ensure inclusive access to education, employment, leadership, and decision-making spaces to redefine power structures. Prioritize access to opportunities for girls and young women, so they can lead and innovate.



Together, we can be the generation that closes the gap and achieves gender equality. The world cannot afford to take a step back. **LET'S GET INVOLVED...**

SHARING (At this moment, we give each participant a piece of paper and a pen)

We have listened to St. Paul, to María Antonia París, and to our reality. Paul speaks to us of a multitude of anonymous women... María Antonia wants strong, grounded, and fearless women... And reality shows us how many women continue to fight every day to defend their rights. All of them, through their works, words, and lifestyle, sustain Christian communities and society.

- 🌐 Return to your personal story, what have I learned from the women I remembered at the beginning of the prayer? What do I feel when I hear their names? How have they become present in my life?
- 🌐 What concrete actions does this day lead me to and invite me to take?
- 🌐 A word that sums up this moment of prayer.



Let's leave a space for silence and then share.

COLLECTING EVERYTHING WE HAVE PRAYED...

On International Women's Day, we cannot forget the suffering reality of our world, especially the situation of many women living through war, injustice, and violence. We invite you to watch this music video the **Prayer of the Mothers** in which Palestinian and Israeli women come together to pray for peace.

Yael Deckelbaum - Prayer of the mothers (Official video): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YyFM-pWdqrY>

FINAL PRAYER

We invite you to end this moment of prayer with the **blessing of women**⁵, entrusting our being as women, the reality of injustice faced by so many women in our world, confident that our God does not abandon us and invites us to work for our rights in our daily lives. Let us walk together with other women and men who, with audacity and courage, joy and love, wish to proclaim and share what God has done in each of us.

Blessing of the woman

«May the Lord grant you
the audacity of Deborah
and the courage of Esther and Judith.
May God fill you with joy as God did Anna,
and with loyalty and faithful love, as God did Ruth.

⁵ Cf. "Women in the Eleventh Hour", Dolores Aleixandre.

– May you be able to sing and dance for joy near the sea
as Miriam the prophetess,
and with Mary of Nazareth,
proclaim the greatness of the Lord,
with the hungry
and humble ones.

– May you come to meet
Jesus, the Lord,
as Mary Magdalene and the Samaritan woman did;
He restored their dignity, freedom,
and gave them a new name.

And like that woman who was bent over whom He approached and made straight,
may you live upright and help others to stand tall.
May you continue to extend your hand, keep the flame alive,
serving in a new way.
May you, we, and all, women and men,
be called to rise up and glorify our God».

