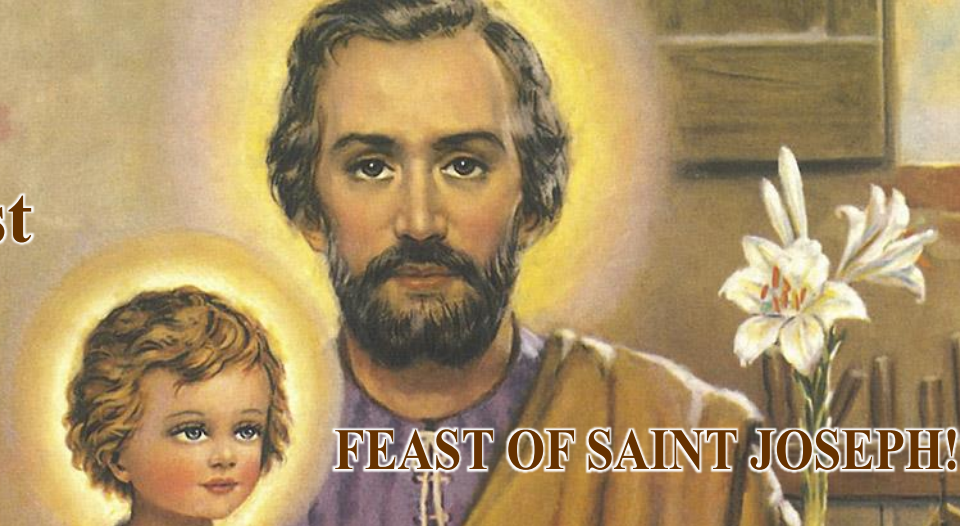


Message for May First



Letter to the IMC Brothers

A TREASURE FOR THE WHOLE INSTITUTE

«You have done well to inaugurate this feast of St. Joseph as the particular one of the coadjutors. There is no better example than that of St. Joseph. He is our teacher... This must teach you to love work, to do your job well, to correspond to your vocation... You must think that you are missionaries and you must have a holy pride of belonging to the class of St. Joseph».

(Joseph Allamano. *Conf. III*, 563)

«It sets us in motion the example of many priests, male e female religious, and lay people who are dedicated to announcing and serving with great fidelity, many times risking life and certainly at the price of their comfort. Their testimony reminds us that the Church does not need so many bureaucrats and officials, but of passionate missionaries, devoured by the enthusiasm of communicating the true life. The saints surprise us, displace us, because their life calls us to come out of our quiet and anesthetizing mediocrity».

(Papa Francesco, *Gaudete et exsultate*, 138)

Very Dear “Missionary Brothers”,
on the occasion of this First Day of May, in which we remember the beautiful and dear figure of St. Joseph, your special Patron, my thoughts run to each of you and would like to be full of that particular affection with which our Founder looked at you. “his favourites”: a look of admiration for your vocation as consecrated missionaries and of deep gratitude for the exemplary nature of your work style. He considered them



“indispensable in the missions”, considering them true apostles, true missionaries, even surpassing the priests themselves: «You have received the missionary vocation, as priest or coadjutor... If I cannot be a priest, I will be a coadjutor, but always a missionary. Just even one missionary coadjutor in Paradise will be better than the other priests». Therefore: «Woe if one would say: oh, you are just a coadjutor!» For this reason, the history of our Institute has unfolded over time with the interweaving of work, wise and fraternal, not only of the missionary priests, but also with that of the “Brothers” who, although they have always been in limited numbers, have given our missionary Family the physiognomy that characterizes it in the Church and among the peoples to whom we proclaim the Gospel. It is therefore unimaginable to think of our Institute, of the Consolata Missionaries, without the Brothers.

The Chapter, which we celebrated a little less than a year ago and which we are trying to make operational in continental meetings, still clearly reminds us: «Since its foundation our Institute is made up of priests and brothers, religious missionaries who live and work together. In the spirit of revitalization and restructuring and in respect of our history, the XIII General Chapter reaffirms the validity of what was affirmed on the vocation of the Brother in the two preceding Chapters... The presence of the Brothers in our missions and their testimony is to be valued **as a treasure for the whole Institute**. In this regard the Brothers are encouraged to live the religious life with love and joy» (nn. 20.22).

A treasure for the whole Institute... I was struck by these words spoken about the Brothers; therefore, their presence, identity and work are not a questionable reality, a passing fashion, a more or less convenient choice, but they constitute our “perennial way” of being Consolata Missionaries, sons of the Allamano, bearers of consolation to the poor and to the afflicted of our world. Therefore, you, Brothers, are witnesses in the Institute, the living memory of the value of religious consecration and of a life spent without measure, definitively and totally, for God and for the Mission. And you remind us of this, even if we speak maybe little of you, or our language is still too “clerical” (see *Acts of the Chapter*, n. 22) or the number of those who choose to be missionary-brothers is decreasing more and more.

A treasure for the whole Institute... because the Founder and the history of the first Brothers show, without a shadow of doubt, that their full realization has its secret in holiness of life and in the generous (often heroic) service to the Mission, everywhere and always: at the beginning of the missionary work, when one is still full of enthusiasm and generosity, but also when life becomes hard, the mission is demanding, the roles are less clear and the strengths diminish... in daily fidelity and in the example of a life entirely dedicated to the Lord and to others.



This is the precious testimony given by many of our Brothers, who remain luminous examples of IMC history. We mention the most well-known ones: Michele Mauro, who spends almost all his fifty years of mission in a carpentry workshop, “converting by example”; Ernesto Pagliarino, who had made his garage “a field of apostolate”; Guerrino Simion, Luigi Rubinetto, Guido Grosso and many others, extraordinarily loved by the Africans, who have educated to Christianity with small daily gestures and their boundless generosity; and Brother Marino De Cesari who, on his deathbed, among the outlets of an unstoppable haemorrhage, whispers: «This blood that I could not shed for the Lord, I give it to him now in this way»...

But, without going too far in time, just recently, two of our Brothers have ended their missionary adventure, leaving behind “the scent of the love of God”: Brother Aldo Allemandi (died on the 3rd of March) and brother Paolo Ferrari (died on the 19th of March). We have known them, we have experienced their joy of being missionaries in their industrious silence, without so many words, until the end. About Brother Paul (with whom I lived beautiful years in Zaire-Congo) I would like to recall what he wrote to the Superior General, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of his religious profession: «Personally I do not know what I could wish more, even if I too register some moments of small difficulty. But there is no comparison with the joy and satisfaction that I have, and this puts me somewhat in alarm». In fact, what worries him is not the situation, the difficulties of work, but «the ability to live day by day more and more generously my ‘consecration’ to the cause of the Kingdom, in fidelity to the spirit that, through Allamano, wanted to characterize our Consolata Family».

A treasure for the whole Institute... It is not only the name by which we call them to remind us, but because, « looking at the testimony left by many Brothers, it is noted that in the communities and even more in the laborious and often harsh life of the missions, it is they who hold high the sense of communion. The simple style and concreteness, the “beatitude of being second”, common sense make them capable of defusing problems and situations, of simplifying matters and discussions. They often do it with wit, joy and optimism, which restore serenity and peace» (p. G. Inverardi).

Perhaps because of their not-so-large number, or the style of their missionary life, in our Brothers is accomplished what Pope Francis suggests to us in his recent Apostolic Exhortation on Holiness:

«Let us allow ourselves to be stimulated by the signs of holiness that the Lord presents to us through the humblest members of those people who also participate in the prophetic office of Christ, spreading the living testimony of Him everywhere, above all through a life of faith and charity...




Let us remember how Jesus invited his disciples to pay attention to details: the small detail that the wine was running out at a party; the small detail that a sheep was missing; the small detail of the widow who offered her two coins... the small detail of having a ready fire and some fish on the grill while waiting for the disciples at dawn...

The community that guards the small details of love, where the members take care of each other and constitute an open and evangelizing space, is the place of the presence of the Risen Christ who is sanctifying it according to the Father's plan. Sometimes, for a gift of the love of the Lord, in the midst of these small details we are given consoling experiences of God». (*Gaudete et exsultate*, 8. 144-145).

Dear missionary Brothers, it is with these words of Pope Francis that I like to conclude my "letter of good wishes" on your feast day. And even if we are worried about the numeric decrease in vocations to to be a Brother; if we are saddened by the fear that may arise in the face of a difficult vocation such as yours; if we are not always able to see the new paths of the Mission that the Lord suggests to us our missionary family wants to look at you as "small details", "humble signs of holiness" non-publicized, through which "we are given consoling experiences of God."

We believe this with all our heart and for this we pray.

With my most fraternal greetings and best wishes to one and all:
courage and forward in Domino!


fr. Stefano Camerlengo
General Superior

