

GIUSEPPE ALLAMANO

# “This I Want You To Be”

Missionary Spirituality and Formation

EMI

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*“This is what I want you to be:  
generous, strong and constant in your vocation”*

Giuseppe Allamano

## DEDICATION

Father Aquiléo Fiorentini IMC  
*Superior General*

Sister Gabriella Bono MC  
*Superior General*

It is with joy and gratitude that we present this new volume on the missionary spirituality and education of our Founder, Blessed Joseph Allamano. We, the men and women missionaries of the Consolata, are privileged to possess – in abundance – the words of our Father. Our resources are rich and authentic. We have received this legacy from those who were personally trained by the Founder and we guard this treasure zealously. For the most part the legacy consists of those Sunday conferences and conversations that reflect his genuine thought. Our early brothers and sisters had the good fortune to hear these words from his own lips; they carefully recorded and passed them on to us. Thanks to those who went before us we who read these words today feel he is still speaking to us.

The Founder's conferences have been published in six volumes (three addressed to men missionaries and three to women missionaries). The six volumes include the handwritten notes Allamano prepared weekly as well as his listeners' notes. To this we would add the great work to which Father Lorenzo Sales devoted his intellect and heart: "La Vita Spirituale" – the organized exposition of the Founder's thought as found in the Sunday conferences he delivered to missionaries over a period of twenty-four years.

This legacy belongs to us the Consolata Missionaries and is a continual source of inspiration. As true sons and daughters of Allamano we will be faithful to this legacy and will pass it on to others – not just in writing but by the example of our lives and our choices. There is one basic way of accomplish this – by remaining united to and one with our Founder. Let us never lose sight of what he said at the end of his life: "I will give my spirit to those who are one with me."

In recent years both our congregations have felt the need to edit these records of our Father's thought; we have eliminated elements that seemed out of step or out of date during this time of post-Vatican II Church renewal. This was no easy task: everything our Father said or wrote is important and we do not want to lose anything. After considerable reflection we assigned a member from each of our congregations to work with others of our brothers and sisters on this task: in the light of Church renewal synthesize Allamano's essential thought as found in "La Vita Spirituale" and the volumes of his conferences. This volume is the result of that endeavor. It contains the whole Allamano's spiritual legacy. Reading this book we have the distinct sensation that he is speaking to us directly as a father, in his own words and on the subjects that were closest to his heart.

This book is intended above all for the younger members of our congregations; it will help them fathom the teachings of our Founder. It is also addressed to all those sons and daughters of Allamano, all lay missionaries and everyone interested in the spirit of this great man, the teacher of priests and father of two great missionary families. The sources we use in this work are by no means outdated – they are the basic point of departure for anyone seeking a fuller understanding of Allamano's thought.

We thank Father Francesco Pavese and Sister Angeles Mantineo and all those who cooperated with them for what they have accomplished. This book is the result of their common endeavor and hard work; it is ample proof that they are true sons and daughters of our Founder. We can only hope that everyone who reads these pages will have the same experience an early missionary described: "After every conference we found ourselves repeating the words of the disciples of Emmaus 'Were not our hearts burning within us as he spoke and explained the Scriptures?'"

May Our Lady, the Consolata, and Blessed Joseph Allamano give light to our minds and bless us.

Father Aquiléo Fiorentini IMC  
Superior General

Sister Gabriella Bono MC  
Superior General

## **BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE OF JOSEPH ALLAMANO**

Joseph Allamano, the fourth of five children, was born on January 21, 1851 in Castelnuovo d'Asti the hometown of Sts. Joseph Cafasso and John Bosco. His father died when he was not yet three years old and his mother, Maria Anna Cafasso – the sister of the saint – was the major influence on his life. Allamano followed in the footsteps of his uncle, St. Joseph and devoted himself to clergy training. He was, like his uncle, a man of exceptional piety; it was often said he was “Cafasso returned” and “an almost perfect copy of his great uncle and predecessor.”

**Don Bosco.** Allamano finished elementary school in 1862 and that autumn entered the Salesian Oratory in Valdocco where his regular confessor was Don Bosco himself. After completing four years of middle school studies at the Oratory he felt called to the diocesan priesthood and left Valdocco for the seminary in Turin. Don Bosco may have thought Allamano would enter his own congregation and gently reproved him: “You hurt my feelings – you left without even saying goodbye.” Allamano responded timidly: “I didn’t have the nerve ...” He felt great affection for Don Bosco all his life long and did not want to displease him.

**The Diocesan Seminary.** His decision to enter the diocesan seminary met with unforeseen opposition in his own family. His brothers and not his mother were opposed to this idea. They were not so much against a priestly vocation but they wanted him to attend the liceo pubblico (high school) before going off to the seminary. Young Joseph was firm and told his brothers: “The Lord is calling me now ... I don’t know if he will still be calling me in two or three years.” In 1866 he entered the seminary. From his first year as a seminarian there were signs of the poor health that would afflict him throughout his life – at times his physical frailty was a genuine threat but on the whole his seminary experience was very positive. Msgr. G.B. Ressa, later the Bishop of Mondovì, was a classmate. Speaking about Allamano he said: “He was the first of our class – and not just alphabetically; he was first in studies, virtue, gentleness and generosity. Every one of us realized that he was closest to the heart of Jesus, he was Jesus’ closest friend – no one of us would have dared to challenge this.”

**Forming seminarians.** On September 20, 1873, Allamano was ordained to the priesthood. He wanted very much to be involved in pastoral ministry but instead was assigned to the seminary first as an assistant (1873-1876) and then as spiritual director (1876-1880). Allamano had very different plans. When the Archbishop, Msgr. Lorenzo Gastaldi, gave him this assignment he objected respectfully: “I had hoped to be an assistant pastor and maybe later a parish priest in some little village...” The Archbishop responded kindly, “You wanted to be a parish priest? If this is all that’s bothering you – I’m giving you the most important parish in the diocese: the seminary!”

As a formator of candidates for the priesthood he was distinguished by the firmness of his principles and the gentleness with which he put these principles into action. Everyone recognized his excellent as an educator: he was a genuine “master of clergy formation.” At this same time he continued his own studies and on July 30, 1876 the Turin Theological Faculty awarded him a doctorate in theology and on June 12, 1877 university teaching credentials. He was later appointed an associate member of the Canon and Civil Law faculty; subsequently he became the president of both of these faculties.

**Rector of the Consolata Sanctuary.** In October 1880 he was appointed Rector of the Consolata Sanctuary in Turin and from that time until his death all his work took place at the Archdiocese’s Marian sanctuary. This new assignment was not an easy one for the 29-year old priest. He later told of his conversation with the Archbishop: “Bishop, I am too young for this job” he said with filial trust. The Archbishop’s response was both fatherly and encouraging: “You’ll see – they will like you all the same. Since you are so young if you make any mistakes you will have the time to correct

them.”

Giacomo Camisassa, a priest Allamano had known and respected when he was the seminary spiritual director, was his first associate at the Sanctuary. He invited Camisassa to the sanctuary and the letter reveals something of Allamano’s pastoral plans. “You see, my friend, together we can accomplish some good and honor Mary, our Mother and Consolation, with our sacred worship.” Their fraternal and priestly collaboration lasted their entire lives. Each respected the other’s work and shared the same ideals. Their work together is a magnificent witness to and example of the two priests’ friendship and pastoral collaboration. Shortly after Camisassa’s death Allamano said, “He was always ready to sacrifice himself to spare me.” “With his death I have lost my two hands.” “We were together, acting as one, for 42 years.” “Every evening we spent long hours together in my study.” “We have promised to tell each other the truth – and we kept this promise.”

The sanctuary was physically run-down and in spiritual decline; Allamano’s leadership initiated a revival. With Camisassa’s active assistance the sanctuary became the artistic, marble and gold jewel we see today. Allamano took charge of the sanctuary’s pastoral, liturgical and social activity; gradually it became a center of Marian spirituality and Christian renewal in the city and the region. Allamano’s special gift for counsel and comfort contributed to this rebirth. People of all classes benefited from his insight and heartfelt concern. Cardinal Jean-Marie Villot remarked, “Allamano was an exemplar of what a genuine priest should be; his was a providential mission for a diocese like Turin. It was a mission of counsel, direction, encouragement, admonition and reviving souls through the sacrament of reconciliation. He brought the joy and peace of God’s friendship to many and encouraged them to work in the apostolate.”

**Retreat Director.** Along with his work as Rector of the Consolata Sanctuary Allamano was also the Rector of the Sanctuary of St. Ignatius in the hills near Lanzo Torinese. This sanctuary had a retreat house attached to it that was well known as a spirituality center: St. Joseph Cafasso had preached there for many years. Allamano saw it as a special place for the formation of priests and laypeople. A close co-worker, Canon G. Capella, said “he was always eager to direct retreats personally; he did not just direct a retreat – he made it himself. He used to say ‘I am not just a channel of retreat grace for others but a basin that gathers grace for himself as well’ [...] While he was its director the St. Ignatius House became a first-class retreat house – there was never an empty room.”

**Following in the footsteps of his uncle: Joseph Cafasso.** To construct a model of priesthood Allamano collected memories of Cafasso and published his biography and writings and he promoted his cause of beatification which he saw fulfilled on May 3, 1925. He candidly admitted: “I led this process not out of affection or family bonds but because of the positive effect this man’s example could produce: those who learn of his virtues will become better priests, Christians and missionaries.” Canon N. Baravalle agreed with this affirmation: “He was never smug about his family connection with the Blessed and during our discussions often remarked, ‘As a relative I really should not be involved in this affair and this is certainly not the reason why I am involved. I am engaged in this process as the Rector of the Retreat House, a position he held before me. I teach and direct and feel it my duty to hold him up as an exemplar of virtue and holiness for priests.’”

After his uncle’s beatification he wrote a circular letter overflowing with joy and emotion to the Consolata Missionaries. “Blessed Joseph Cafasso is the patron and co-founder of the “Convitto” (a residence and school for newly ordained priests). He is a light and example for devout souls – especially ecclesiastics. But he is also our special protector – ‘your uncle’ – honor him and imitate his virtues. I believe that with his beatification I have provided you with a means to reach holiness; the beatification has been part of my mission on your behalf.”

**Rector of the “Convitto” (Community of priests).** Allamano worked hard to heal the breach caused by the closing of the Convitto Ecclesiastico where young priests were trained. The Archbishop ordered this closing because of controversy about the teaching of moral theology. Allamano brought about the re-opening of this institution in 1882 and was its director until his

death. He was very much concerned with the spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation of young priests and made sure that his program was up-to-date. He emphasized the ultimate goal of a priestly vocation: to save one's brothers. He emphasized the missionary ideal to Convitto residents. For him the missionary dimension was an essential part of the priestly vocation: "essentially every priest has a missionary vocation. This vocation is that great love of the Lord that compels us to do all we can to make Our Lord Jesus Christ known and loved by those who have not yet encountered Him." Convincing the Archbishop to move the Convitto to the Consolata Sanctuary was one of Allamano's greatest accomplishments.

**Apostle in the local Church.** Along with everything reported above Allamano was directly or indirectly involved in a host of other apostolic works. He was a canon of the Cathedral, a member of various commissions and committees, the religious superior of the Visitation nuns and the Sisters of St. Joseph. He was very much involved in anniversary celebrations and worked hard helping refugees, drafted priests and seminarians in the army during the First World War. Allamano showed an aptitude for working in all sorts of apostolates. Canon N. Baravalle lived with him at the Sanctuary and tells us: "The most modern forms of Catholic apostolate – the press, the media – were not just something he admired but to which he made what were for those times substantial financial contributions." Msgr. G.B. Pinardi, the Auxiliary Bishop of Turin writes: "During Allamano's life there was no single apostolic project that escaped the influence of the Consolata residence."

Allamano was a fervent supporter of Catholic journalism – not just in his youth or at the height of his powers but even in old age and up to the time of his death. Msgr. B. Caselli, editor of the Turin Catholic newspaper, wrote that "our Catholic paper always enjoyed his authoritative, heartfelt and moral support." Canon A. Cantono has this to say: "He was a valid critic of our journalism work – he wanted it to be clean and precise. He told me we should not be afraid of modern forms or technology."

**Father of Missionaries.** Fired by his intense apostolic zeal and a lively understanding of the Church's mission Allamano's concerns involved the whole world. He felt the urgency of Christ's command to carry the Gospel to the ends the earth. He thought it unnatural that the Church that sponsored so many institutions devoted to charity should not have an organization solely dedicated to the missions. He sought to remedy this situation - helping those who felt the missionary call to carry out their vocation and encouraging this call in others. Establishing a missionary congregation was not a spur-of-the-moment impulse; Allamano conceived this idea after prolonged spiritual preparation and in the face of noteworthy obstacles and contradictions. Undoubtedly the work of establishing the congregation was one of trial and fatigue for Allamano. He was already deeply involved in Cafasso's cause, work at the Convitto and Sanctuary as well as administrator of Sant'Ignazio.

In 1891 he believed the right moment had arrived to launch his missionary Congregation of priests and brothers but he was only able to carry out this project when his friend and classmate Cardinal Agostino Richelmy became the Archbishop. In Richelmy Allamano found someone who supported him and shared his ideals. Delay came to an abrupt end through the intervention of Divine Providence. In January 1900 he was close to death; he had contracted a disease from an old woman he was assisting in an icy attic. He always believed that his recovery was a miracle of Our Lady, the Consolata. He never doubted that this was a sign that the Congregation was to be established. The following year, January 29, 1901, the Congregation of the Consolata Missionaries was born.

Allamano's indomitable spirit was the underlying motivation for this missionary enterprise. Fr L. Sales, his loving disciple and first biographer, claims that the root cause of this missionary endeavor is Allamano's sanctity – he himself said, "Since I couldn't be a missionary myself I wanted to make it possible for those with this vocation to follow their heart." There were other circumstantial reasons for launching this work – a desire to continue Cardinal Massaia's work, the missionary

spirit and urgings of the priests living in the Residence (Convitto). Allamano says as much in a letter to Cardinal Richelmy on April 6, 1900: “During my many years training clergy I must confess that I have often encountered genuine missionary vocations.” The final decision to found a congregation of missionaries was taken only at the explicit command of the Archbishop. Allamano responded to this command with Peter’s words to Jesus on the night of the miraculous catch: “In your name I will cast out my nets.”

On May 8, 1902 the first four missionaries left for Kenya: two priests and two laymen. Others followed shortly afterwards. Quickly becoming aware of the need of female collaborators Allamano got permission from the superiors at Cottolengo to send Vincentian Sisters to Kenya to work alongside the Consolata Missionaries. This collaboration began in 1903 and lasted more than twenty-two years. Difficulties arose between the newly elected Vicar Apostolic, Msgr. Filippo Perlo and the Cottolengo superiors and sisters ceased being sent in 1909. Gradually those sisters working in Kenya returned to Italy.

Allamano witnessed this crisis but was unable to forestall its consequences. He felt forced to intervene to assure the necessary presence of sisters in the missions. At the urging of Msgr. F. Perlo, with the permission of his archbishop and on the advice of Cardinal Girolamo Gotti, Prefect of Propaganda Fide and Pope St. Pius X’s support Allamano founded the Congregation of Consolata Missionary Sisters on January 29, 1910. He told the sisters how their congregation came to be founded. He was asking them to pray for Cardinal Gotti who was very sick at the time and he said “He (Gotti) it was who encouraged me to establish the sisters. He said to me, ‘It is God’s will that there be sisters.’ – And I responded ‘But there are already so many sisters’ – ‘Yes,’ he said ‘many sisters but few missionaries.’” Allamano also revealed the Pope’s involvement: “It was Pope Pius X who wanted you; he it was who gave me the vocation of creating women missionaries.” He would continue with pleasure and recount his conversation with Pius X to whom he had spoken of his problems finding female personnel for the missions. The Pope said, “You yourself must establish a congregation of missionary sisters – like the one you have founded for men missionaries.” “But, Your Holiness,” Allamano objected, “there are already so many congregations of sisters.” “But none,” the Pope responded, “that are exclusively missionary.” “But Holy Father,” Allamano continued, “I don’t feel I have a vocation to found a congregation of sisters!” “If you don’t have it,” the Pope said, “I will give it to you.” Logically Allamano would say to the sisters, “You see, it was the Pope, not me, who is responsible for your existence. In a sense you are “Papal.”

In later years other mission territories were entrusted to the men and women Consolata Missionaries in Ethiopia, Tanzania, Somalia and Mozambique. Today the Consolata Missionaries are working in twenty-four countries on the continents of Africa, America, Europe and Asia.

Through personal contact, letters and formation meetings Allamano lavished attention on his sons and daughters. He believed that the missions deserved the best we had to offer; he was more concerned with quality than quantity. He looked for well-prepared, genuinely holy evangelists who were willing to give their lives for the missions. He had as a motto: First saints and then missionaries. For him this “first” was not a question of time but of priority.

**He encourages and blesses us from heaven.** Allamano died on February 16, 1926 at the Consolata Sanctuary. Today his remains are preserved at the motherhouse in Corso Ferrucci in Turin. Missionaries, friends of the missions and pilgrims have come to visit his resting place. Allamano’s sarcophagus is not just a tomb – it is an altar on which Mass is celebrated. Allamano’s sons and daughters have placed the remains of his close collaborator and co-founder, Camisassa next to his body.

Allamano was beatified on October 7, 1990 by John Paul II. The Pope confirmed the tributes the new Blessed had received during his life and after his death: “the Consolata Saint,” “Provident Father,” “Formator and Teacher of the Clergy,” “a Priest for the whole world.” During the homily he delivered at the beatification the Pope said: “From the moment his name was added to the list of the blessed Joseph Allamano reminds us that being faithful to our Christian vocation involves

knowing how to share the gifts we have received from God with brothers from every race and background. It involves proclaiming Christ with courage and coherence to everyone we encounter – and especially those who do not yet know Him.”

Allamano left a written last will and testament to his missionaries. It included words of encouragement that are valid for all who embrace the missionary vocation. “I have lived my many years for your sake; I have given my possessions, my health and my life for you and I hope that after my death I will be your protector in heaven.”



## ALLAMANO'S CHRONOLOGY

January 21	1851	Born in Castelnuovo d'Asti, the son of Giuseppe Allamano and Maria Anna Cafasso (the sister of St. Joseph Cafasso)
January 22	1851	Baptized in the parish church and given the names Giuseppe Ottavio (Joseph Octavius)
October 17	1860	Receives the sacrament of Confirmation
	1861-1866	A student at the Salesian Oratory; St. John Bosco is his spiritual director
	1866-1873	Studies philosophy and theology at the Turin Seminary
March 29	1873	Ordained to the diaconate
September 20	1873	Ordained to the priesthood
September 21	1873	Celebrates first Mass at Castelnuovo
	1873-1876	Assistant at the Seminary
July 30	1876	Awarded doctorate in theology
June 12	1877	Becomes Associate Doctor of the Turin Theological Faculty
September	1880	Appointed Rector of the Consolata Sanctuary, the Ecclesiastical Residence (Convitto) and the Sanctuary of St. Ignatius
October 2	1880	Begins service as Rector of the Consolata Sanctuary
February 10	1883	Named honorary canon of the Metropolitan Church
January 19-29	1900	Grave illness and miraculous cure
April 24	1900	Sends a letter from Rivoli to Cardinal A. Richelmy about founding the Consolata Missionary Congregation
January 29	1901	Decree establishing the Consolata Institute of the Missions
June 18	1901	Inaugurates the first motherhouse – the “Consolatina” in Turin
May 8	1902	Departure of the first four Consolata Missionaries for Kenya
May 13	1903	Departure of the first eight Cottolengo Vincentian Sisters for Kenya
June 11-20	1904	Consolata Sanctuary Centenary celebration
June 28	1909	Erection of the Apostolic Vicariate of Kenya
October 9	1909	Opens the Motherhouse in Corso F. Ferrucci in Turin
December 28	1909	The Congregation receives the Decretum Laudis
January 29	1910	Foundation of the Consolata Missionary Sisters
November 3	1913	Departure of the first fifteen Consolata Missionary Sisters for Kenya
August 18	1922	Death of the co-founder, Canon Giacomo Camisassa

September 7	1923	Propaganda Fide gives its definitive approval to the Consolata Constitutions
September 20	1923	Celebrates fiftieth anniversary of ordination
May 3	1925	Goes to Rome for the beatification of Cafasso
February 16	1926	Allamano dies
October 7	1990	Allamano is beatified

## INTRODUCTION

**Joseph Allamano's Conferences to Missionaries.** Every Sunday Joseph Allamano held separate formation conferences for men and women missionaries. These conferences are an inexhaustible source of first class missionary spirituality and teaching. The spontaneity and simplicity of these conferences is striking. They are more like the spiritual conversations a father has with his sons and daughters to prepare them for their future mission. The contents of these conferences are preserved in sixteen notebooks; 552 pages in Allamano's hand have been preserved and constitute a legacy for the two congregations he founded.

When he handed these notebooks to the novice master, Father Giuseppe Nepote, he remarked: "The manuscripts of these conferences contain my real thought." Allamano's young missionaries took careful and accurate notes of what he had to say. These notes constitute an almost verbatim record of his conferences. Allamano was aware of these transcripts and gave them his paternal approval: "They represent the substance of what I had to say to you off the cuff."

It is beautiful to recall how interested the young missionaries were in the Founder's conferences. These Sunday meetings became formation events par excellence. Allamano, the father, met with his young sons and daughters, all of whom knew and loved him. The meetings were an example of the family spirit that pervaded the Congregation. Everyone looked forward to seeing and hearing him and thought the conferences were too short – no one was ever bored. This is not an idyllic description but something based on the eye-witness testimony of the many missionaries who heard these talks. It reflected the atmosphere on those Sunday afternoons when he was present in the community. Here is what some have to say: "On Sundays he was everything for his children. His talks were never authoritarian or rigid; he spoke as a father in the midst of his family. He wanted us to sit around him – especially the brothers – and he spoke off the cuff. His advice was almost whispered but it remained impressed on our hearts and filled us with his spirit" (Brother Benedetto Falda). "His zeal for our formation and sanctification was especially apparent in his wonderful Sunday conferences. He would arrive smiling, sit down and take out a piece of paper and we would be entranced by what he had to say. How much we looked forward to those talks which always seemed too short." (Father Vincenzo Dolza). "He would come periodically to give us a talk – always something practical and fatherly. He spoke with great simplicity, clarity and depth. He did not hesitate to speak about himself when he wanted us to behave as he would have in the same circumstances..." (Sister Margherita Demaria). "At times he came on Sundays to talk to us even when suffering from migraine. We felt sorry for him – his suffering was clearly apparent." (Sister Michelina Abbà).

**Allamano's words and those who were far off.** Evidence of how precious the Founder's words were considered during his life is the fact that they were passed on to those who were far off. Every now and then students in Turin would send transcriptions of these conferences to their confrères in Africa. During the war they sent them to those in military service. In May 1918 the Congregation's internal bulletin "Da Casa Madre" began a column entitled "Words of Our Father." Initially Allamano himself wrote a brief letter to his disciples both near and far. During World War I his letters were addressed primarily to his followers who had been drafted into the army. After less than a year the column was discontinued but the Founder's words continued to appear everywhere in the bulletin. Da Casa Madre was initially mimeographed but from 1921 on it was printed and the column La Parola del Padre [Words of Our Father] began to reappear. The contents were taken from Allamano's Sunday conferences. After the founder's death the column took on special significance – it became a point of reference, something we all read eagerly. These sensitive words introduced the column in the second issue of 1926: "Our venerable Father and Founder is no longer with us. He now enjoys in heaven the reward he so justly deserves for his good deeds. Certainly all our confrères will be pleased to read passages from the Sunday evening conferences we so loved and

looked forward to. We hear again his voice: those familiar, deep but unaffected words that seemed so apt. We can experience once more the many happy hours we spent together and we know that he is now blessing us with the same paternal affection he showed us while still alive.”

The same thing more or less happened with the sisters’ congregation. They too sent copies of our Father’s conferences to the sisters in the missions. Their bulletin was called “Alle Sorelle d’Oltremare, Filo d’oro, Supplemento del Da Casa Madre” [To Our Sisters Overseas, a Golden Thread, Supplement to Da Casa Madre].

**Transcriptions of the Conferences.** Both men and women missionaries have always shown great love for our Father’s teachings which held pride of place in our communities and were especially useful in training our young people. Various typewritten copies of conference notes and transcriptions have circulated. Besides the manuscripts prepared for the canonization there are two principal collections. The first was edited by Father G. Chiomio in 1938 using Allamano’s handwritten notes. Other confrères reviewed this collection and guaranteed its authenticity. In the preface to this collection, Chiomio writes: “This humble work is a filial homage to our Father. It was undertaken and carried through to completion with one specific goal: to save this irreplaceable treasure from the mists of oblivion or other dangers – fire, etc. These are the teachings of our grace-filled beginnings – ne pereant scripta Patris [lest the writings of our Father perish.]

The second transcription of the Founder’s conferences was edited in eight volumes by Father Giuseppe Gallea from 1947 to 1966. Gallea merged Allamano’s notes with the transcriptions of his listeners. This work was carried out with the love of a son. The missionary sisters have preserved 506 conferences and in 1944 a first typewritten collection appeared in two volumes as part of the material prepared for the Founder’s beatification.

**Synthesis of Allamano’s Teaching.** Finally Father Lorenzo Sales one of our first missionaries and an intimate acquaintance of Allamano was asked by our superiors to prepare publication of the conferences. This collection appeared in 1949 with the title *La Dottrina Spirituale* [Spiritual Teaching]. This work was later re-edited and appeared in 1962 with the title *La Vita Spirituale* [The Spiritual Life] – the title we know today. It is a single volume of 898 pages.

Father Sales’ work contains the whole of Allamano’s teaching in his own words. Subjects are presented in a logical order and combine Allamano’s writings and viva voce remarks on different occasions. Since this work was compiled in the male missionary milieu all the references are masculine – even when a particular idea was addressed to the sisters.

A close reading of *La Vita Spirituale* reveals immediately what Allamano was hoping to achieve with these Sunday conferences: to be closely involvement in the training the young missionaries and sharing with them his own spirit. Consequently these teachings are a precious treatise on spirituality and missionary training which is still valid today. It finds inspiration in the Word of God and is enriched with Patristic teaching, the insights of the Saints and sound theological doctrine. His own life experience makes all of this relevant and up-to-date.

**Publishing the integral text of the conferences.** During the 1980s both congregations felt the need to approach the founder as those first missionaries did: to read the conferences exactly as he gave them Sunday after Sunday from 1902 to 1925. We felt the need to recreate today the atmosphere that existed at our origins. To meet this need Father Igino Tubaldo published the *Conferences to Missionaries* with an analytical index in 1981. The publication ran to three volumes and 2288 pages. In 1984 the Historical Office of the Congregation published the conferences for missionary sisters similarly with an analytical index – three volumes comprising 1777 pages. In both these publications the majority of conferences are presented in the following way: first Allamano’s handwritten notes and then the transcription made by his listeners.

The Consolata Missionaries are grateful to their Father for this inestimable gift. Both the *Conferences* and *La Vita Spirituale* represent an indisputably valuable point of departure and reference. They have played a role in training generations of apostles. These texts contain

Allamano's original inspiration as he understood and passed it on to others. For this reason they are "sacred texts" and should never be modified.

**Origin of the present volume.** At the beginning of this third millennium members of both congregations have felt the need to interpret and understand the Founder's insights stripped of the vocabulary, expressions and pedagogy of a bygone era. Some of the subjects Allamano discussed are outmoded or have undergone substantial modification in the Vatican II era. They can no longer be discussed in quite the same way today as people – especially the young – would have trouble understanding them as they appear in our sources.

With this premise and after much reflection the General Directorates of our two Congregations have decided to produce the present work. We have laid out specific guidelines for this task and entrusted it to two members of our Congregations who have enjoyed the assistance of many others.

**How to read this work.** This book is the result of the decision made by the two missionary congregations Allamano founded. To read these pages with greater ease and insight certain things must be understood.

a. The principal source of our material is *La Vita Spirituale*. This volume is a faithful and orderly presentation of the substance of Allamano's teaching. However when it appeared useful to complete or clarify a subject passages from other conference transcriptions – passages that Sales omitted – were added.

b. Members of both the Consolata Missionary Fathers and Sisters are convinced that the classical sources of our Founder's thought and teaching are the volumes of conferences and *La Vita Spirituale*. One must always return to these primary sources for a better and deeper understanding of his original inspiration. Consequently this present work is in no way a new version, synthesis or refashioning of *La Vita Spirituale* and even less of the conference volumes. It is a new presentation of Allamano's thinking that draws only on those original sources. He, and he alone, is the one speaking here. The reader will come into direct contact with his words, his style of speaking and his authentic spirit.

c. While we have made slight changes in wording – as Allamano himself said, he was speaking "off-the-cuff" and his language was the simple and conversational with a trace of the Piedmontese dialect we have been careful to preserve the words and style of his original statements.

d. We have with discernment chosen appropriate topics from *La Vita Spirituale* that convey Allamano's genuine charism to missionary workers of the Third Millennium. We have omitted subjects, words and expressions outdated by Church renewal or too closely linked to the theological or ascetic fashions of Allamano's time. When a specific word-change is substantial we have added a footnote explaining our reasons for the change.

e. As noted earlier *La Vita Spirituale* is addressed entirely to men even though Allamano spoke to women as well. While bearing in mind their diverse sensibilities families teach their sons and daughters the same values Allamano did likewise with men and women missionaries. Evidence of this is the fact that he gave separate conferences to the two groups but used the same handwritten notes for both. His subject did not change – he provided the same training to male and female missionaries. But his manner of speaking, his tone and what he emphasized was adjusted to his audience. This is clear from the notes taken in the two groups. It would not be a bad idea to prepare two volumes like the present one – one for women and one for men- that reflected the different conferences he gave to male and female missionaries. The subjects would remain pretty much the same but the atmosphere, expression and focus would certainly be different. For obvious reasons, however, we decided to put all the material together in one book for Allamano's sons, daughters and all those men and women who are linked to us in spirit. This is why the words in these pages are addressed to everyone without distinction.

f. With regard to our method: The chapter titles and subdivisions have been supplied by the editors of this work – they are not original. When possible the chapter titles reflect Allamano's own

words. There are two types of footnotes: one identifies individuals who had some tie with Allamano and the other explains the reasons for a change in wording. Generally Allamano cites in his notes the essential source of a phrase or expression (Church Fathers or spiritual writers). Father Sales' text provides abundant citations which are certainly helpful in studying particular concepts in greater depth. This volume does not include bibliographical footnotes but it does provide an essential bibliography and an index of biblical citations. Finally there is an analytical index. For easier reference the sections of this book are numbered.

g. Along with these records of his conversations Allamano's thought can be found in other published sources or archival material. Most important of these publications is certainly Father Candido Bona's eleven volumes "Quasi una vita" (1990-1992). All of Allamano's correspondence (letters sent and received) with extensive commentary can be found here. Of no less importance is the collection of letters sent to men and women missionaries without commentary published in 2004 by Father I. Tubaldo. In the archives we have the formation conferences and moral theology notes prepared for priests living in the Convitto/Residence. Other such material includes homilies given to clerics in the Archdiocesan Seminary; explanations of the rule; notes for ceremonies; notebooks and memos on seminary life; sermons on various occasions and other miscellaneous documents: three chapters of a biography of his uncle, Joseph Cafasso, a novena in honor of the Consolata, a diary of his pilgrimage to Rome and other shrines in Italy, etc.

**Audience.** Allamano's teachings as found in this volume are addressed primarily to the men and women in formation. For many reasons it can be difficult for them to understand the texts of "La Vita Spirituale" and the conferences as he delivered. They require a good deal of explanation by those in charge of formation. The same input and expressions are obviously valid for all our men and women missionaries and also to the Lay Consolata Missionaries. There is no doubt that the content of this text which is spontaneous expression of the spirituality of this man of God, can also be useful to priests, religious and all those who desire to know and live according to his spirit.

We only hope that all who read these pages will feel the need to know Allamano better and will have recourse to the sources which form the basis of this work.

# 1 Missionaries, yes but saints as well

## Holiness and Mission: the Congregation's goals

1. **“This is God's will that you be saints”** (1 Thessalonians 4,3). God requires holiness from everyone, even from simple Christians who achieve it through observance of the commandments of God and the Church, the exercise of Christian virtues and the perfect performance of the duties of one's state of life. If this is the will of God for all Christians how much more does he expect from those to whom He has given the holiest of vocations?

That you become saints: this is my principal concern and my constant preoccupation. It is not enough that God has given you a very special vocation nor is it enough that you enjoy its benefits and advantages. You must appreciate it and pursue the perfection it presupposes. This is our goal: to become saints, great saints, saints as soon as possible.

As men and women religious you have the strict duty to respond to your vocation. You need not be perfect when you enter religious life but your efforts to achieve holiness must be determined and relentless. Priests and aspirants to the priesthood must be even holier. St. Paul tells shepherds to be irreprehensible and examples of all virtue (Cf. Titus 2,7). As men and women missionaries your ideal is not just to be saints but exceptional saints. This is why you have come here; this is your first duty; the primary purpose of your vocation; the principal instrument of your apostolate. Your holiness must be special, heroic and on occasion great enough to perform miracles. The other gifts are not enough for you – there must be holiness, great holiness.

2. **Embrace the Congregation's purpose.** The primary aim of the Congregation is the sanctification of its members. Let whoever joins our ranks embrace this goal. In the Constitutions<sup>1</sup> this goal – sanctification – was not an afterthought; it was specifically included because it is an integral part of our practical life. The Constitutions were not handed down from heaven but they enjoy the same authority as if they had been. They are the fruit of experience, the serious study of other rules and special prayer; they have been revised and approved by the authorities of the Church. Accept them as coming from the hands of God. A spirit of faith will make you respect each single word; it will make you love the Constitutions and observe them exactly.

If you really want to become saints the Congregation provides you with the means. Your shortcomings and the shortcomings of other can even help you reach this goal. St. Paul tells us: “And we know that in all things work for the good of those who love God, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8,28). And you are called to holiness and to a very special holiness. See to it that everything, including your defects and the defects of others, works for your benefit.

Note that the Constitutions always speak in the plural: the sanctification of missionaries. Everything in the Congregation is directed towards one goal: to make all of us saints. Not just some of us but all of us. It follows we must be committed not just to our own sanctification but to that of others as well. The whole community is committed to each member and each member is committed to the whole community. Whoever fails to become a saint harms not just himself but the whole community – he frustrates its efforts to reach its goal. Often we are self-absorbed and do too much by ourselves – we don't even think of helping others. This does not reflect the family spirit that is so beneficial and motivates each of us to work for his own sanctity and that of others. Yes, each individual must become a saint but there must also be mutual assistance. We must look on the

<sup>1</sup> Allamano is here referring to the *Costituzioni dei Missionari della Consolata* (1909) Article 1: “The Congregation has its purpose: first the sanctification of its members through observance of the religious vows and the Constitutions [...]” this holds true for the Sisters' Constitutions as well [*Costituzioni delle Missionarie della Consolata* (1913)], Article 1: “The Congregation has its purpose: first the sanctification of the missionary sisters through observance of the religious vows and the Constitutions [...]”

sanctity of others as if it were our own.

We must never let ourselves be held back by human considerations or by those who are less fervent. Never say it is not up to you to be the most zealous or meticulous in observing the rules. Each of us must begin with himself. If I expect perfection in others it is only just that I strive for it myself. Don't you agree that if each of us worked to achieve this goal we would all soon be saints. Let everyone, even the most recent arrival, be determined to make progress in virtue without fear of standing out or being noticed.

**3. First saints and then missionaries.** You are here to become Consolata Missionaries. You cannot accomplish this unless you live and work to achieve the goal of the Congregation: the sanctification of our members and the conversion of people. And something I tell you over and over: souls are saved through holiness<sup>2</sup>. It is impossible to make others good when we are not good ourselves. No one gives what he does not have. We can administer a sacrament without being holy but convert a person – no. If an individual is not closely united to God in charity, God will not ordinarily allow him to touch the hearts of others – this would be asking for a miracle. Believe me, unless you yourself are aflame you cannot kindle a fire. If you do not possess the fire of charity you cannot spread it to others. You must never neglect your own union with God or sacrifice your own holiness for the sake of others.

Anyone who says, “I am here to become a missionary and that is all” is making a mistake. No, that is not all! We cannot transpose the two phrases: first we become saints and then we convert others. Missionaries, yes – but saints as well. Let each one reflect on the obligation he assumed when he entered the Congregation; think of the voice of God calling him to become a saint. Every day at Communion or when you visit the Blessed Sacrament renew your determination and say to yourself: I want to become a saint, I want to become a great saint, I want to become a saint immediately. I can do it, I ought to do it, I will to do it. Therefore, first saints and then missionaries.

**4. Haphazard holiness.** The holiness Consolata Missionaries are striving for is not something haphazard – everyone following his own whims – it is a holiness spelled out in the Constitutions and directives of legitimate superiors.

Holiness is one – but it has different forms and there are various ways to achieve it. It would be a mistake for someone preparing to be a missionary religious to follow the Carthusian rule or the discipline of a diocesan priest. Each congregation has its own personality and its own means to holiness.

There is in the community a holiness that is too ordinary and untested. Let me explain myself: you are good, pious and obedient when everything is going your way but as soon as something goes against you your virtue falters. Holiness requires energy. The Imitation of Christ says: “You will make progress to the extent that you do violence to yourself.” I would hope that your sanctification was something solid and serious and not haphazard. Let this be your goal: devote yourself immediately with all your energy to acquiring genuine holiness and not waving your arms about with ephemeral longings. Face up to the little trials of everyday life and overcome them. Be strong and steadfast in the type of holy life you have chosen. It is not the one who starts well that will be rewarded but rather the one who perseveres to the end.

**5. The extraordinary in the ordinary.** The holiness I want for you is not that you perform miracles

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<sup>2</sup> To avoid misrepresenting what Allamano is saying two things must be made clear. First: in the vocabulary of his time the word “souls” meant “persons”. “Person” is the word more likely to be used in our time and will be used here in this text. Second: when he speaks about converting/saving souls through holiness he is referring to evangelization through the witness of a holy life.



but that you do all things well. There is a striking passage in the Gospel: after Jesus had cured the deaf mute the crowds remarked, “He has done all things well” (Mark 7,37). Would it not have been more appropriate after the miracle to say, “We have seen wondrous things” (Luke 5,26)? And instead they say “He has done all things well!” This is the highest praise people could give Jesus. Not only in extraordinary things but in ordinary, common things he did everything well. These words should be written on our walls and when we die, on our tombstones: Bene omnia fecit – He has done all things well.

My remaining years are few – but even if they were many I would want to live them out doing good and doing it well.<sup>3</sup> I agree with what Cafasso<sup>4</sup> had to say: one must do good well and not make a show of it. Do good promptly, carefully and with good will. It is not enough to pray the rosary, one must pray it well. If we are studying we must study well. If we are working, we must work well. Everything we do during the day we must do well. Happy is the missionary who kneels in front of the Blessed Sacrament in the evening and can honestly say: I have done everything well! We must be happy to become saints in the ordinary way.

The Lord who inspired this Congregation has also inspired its practices and its means to achieve perfection and holiness. Saints are not saints because they have performed miracles rather because they have done all things well. Do not ask the Lord for the power to perform miracles – this is something He gives to whom He wills and it is not necessary for our sanctification. I don’t want this to become a house of miracles; we have so many other things to accomplish before we begin thinking about miracles. The miracle I want from you is to do everything from morning to evening well. They said about St. Joseph Cafasso “that he was extraordinary in ordinary things.” We seldom have a chance to do the extraordinary; but occasions to do the ordinary – we have these all day every day. It is more important to be excellent, fervent, faithful, conscientious missionaries than to perform 10,000 baptisms. You must excel in everything. Not extraordinary things – you must be extraordinary in the ordinary. Let us become saints without fanfare. It is not how many things we do but how well we do them! God is to be found as much in little things as He is in great things.

**6. To do good well.** And how can we do all things well? St. Joseph Cafasso offers us some suggestions. The first is that we do everything as the Lord would do it. We must model ourselves on Jesus and do everything as He would do it so that it is He who lives and works through us. We must ask ourselves, “If Jesus was in my place what would he do? Would He think what I am thinking? Would He say what I am saying? Would He do what I am doing?” I want each of you to be a living image of the Lord. All the saints strove to model themselves on the Lord. Another suggestion is perform every action as if it were the last one of your life. Whatever you do, do it so you are satisfied even if death were to strike you immediately afterwards. Finally do everything as if you had absolutely nothing else to do. Age quod agis [Do what you do – well]. Put your whole self into your present duty without thinking of what you were doing before or what you will do afterwards.

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<sup>3</sup> Allamano made this statement on October 28, 1906 when he was 55 years old. He lived another twenty years – a long journey of commitment to do good and do it well.

<sup>4</sup> St. Joseph Cafasso (1811-1860) was the brother of Marianna Cafasso, the mother of Joseph Allamano. Allamano was involved in promoting Cafasso’s cause for beatification and edited two biographies of his uncle: one written by Canon Giacomo Colombo (1895) and another by Abbot Nicolis di Robilant (published posthumously in 1912). Allamano also published *Meditazioni* and *Istruzioni* from retreat material (1892-1893).

In 1836 the theologian Luigi Guala invited Cafasso to join him at the *Convitto Ecclesiastico* (Ecclesiastical Residence) and is considered its co-founder. The Residence was an institution for training young priests in the diocese of Turin. In 1848 he became the Rector of the Residence and Professor of Moral Theology – positions he occupied until his death. Cafasso’s moral theology followed the teaching of St. Alphonsus de Liguori. He trained many priests in spirituality and the apostolate – among whom was St. John Bosco. He was zealous in all his apostolic activities, a well known confessor and preacher of retreats for priests and lay people. He assisted prisoners and those condemned to death; his counsel was sought by people of every social class; he inspired and supported religious institutions. He was an outstanding example of Christian hope and a tireless preacher of Divine Mercy. Pope Pius XI beatified him on May 3, 1925 and Pius XII canonized him on June 22, 1947. In these pages he is usually referred to as “St. J. Cafasso” or simply “Cafasso.”

I always ask myself this question before the Lord: is the Congregation doing well? Is it carrying out His Will? All of you do the same thing but not in the same way. Our sanctification, especially in a community, depends on attending to little things. Big things don't happen too often and they don't affect everyone, moreover there is always the danger of pride. The little things, however, happen every day at every hour and they affect all of us.

Examine yourselves before God: do you realize that you can offend God in little things too? Venial sins: a small but deliberate lie; a voluntary distraction at prayer; a lack of fraternal charity; a distaste for the moral or physical defects of others; failures in poverty or mortification; unwillingness to obey superiors; criticism and grumbling – the curse of a community, etc. It is not enough to avoid these shortcomings, even though they are inconsequential; we must do better – we must do small things well. If we have not learned to do little things well we will come up short when big things occur. There are so many occasions throughout the day to perform little acts of virtue! Let this be your goal: avoid the smallest voluntary fault and practice little acts of virtue. It is the little things done well that makes a community perfect. Let the members of our Congregation achieve holiness through faithfulness in little things. May God help you understand this and give you strength and grace!

**7. To evangelize with holiness of life.** Missionaries should both be and be seen to be holy: holiness of life speaks to people. People must be able to see God in missionaries. Jesus said to his apostles: “Whoever sees me sees the Father” (John 14,9) and you in your turn must say: whoever sees me sees Jesus! The habit and the preaching do not make a missionary – there must be works. Your works bear witness to people. Let us say with Jesus: “For the work the Father has given me to accomplish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me. The works I do bear witness to me” (John 5,36).

The devil is “the strong man fully armed” who dominates others with the chains of passion and superstition. Being sent by Our Lord Jesus Christ it is not enough to defeat him – we must possess the spirit of holiness. The missionary must pray more, practice greater mortification and be holier. He must be extraordinarily holy.

If a mission is not successful it might be our fault – we may not be fit instruments in the hands of God. I am not saying that this is always the case but certainly if we were really saints the Lord would use us to achieve greater things. Converting others is something altogether supernatural. The greater our intimacy and friendship with Jesus the more we can hope for his intervening grace. We must ask ourselves if our lack of success is not somehow due to our lack of holiness – after so many centuries of apostolate there are still so many parts of the world that are not Christian. We must be convinced of the need to be saints.

**8. Saints are happier.** Whoever gives himself genuinely and totally to the Lord will enjoy well-being and happiness even here on earth. The more we hunger and thirst for holiness, the more we hunger and thirst for God the happier we will be. The saints who experienced this hunger and thirst were the happiest of people. Their inner peace and heartfelt joy were so great that they could be seen and shared with others. About St. Joseph Cafasso it is written that just his presence and a few words were enough to lift the spirits of others. And about St. Vincent De Paul people said, “Vincent, always Vincent” meaning Vincent was always the same, always cheerful whatever happened in his life. He wasn't indifferent or insensitive but that through God's love he faced every situation with good cheer. When one's heart is at peace, when one feels God loves him what can possibly upset him? One can repeat the words of St. Paul: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Romans 8, 35.37).

**9. Take the first step – courageously.** We must begin immediately to make ourselves saints. We must launch without delay the work of becoming saints. We cannot be sure of having the same grace tomorrow that we have today. The grace you ignore now you will never have again. You may have other graces but not this one and you must account to God for this grace. Be courageous and take the first step. Today, not tomorrow. Here, in this house.

If you leave this house as simply good you will certainly not improve; you will not become saints later on. If you do not build up a reserve of virtue here, once you are in the missions you will not move forward in perfection rather you will go backwards. Here God provides a wealth of special graces just for you and for your sanctification.

**10. To be practical.** St. Ignatius Loyola tells us that people striving for holiness can be divided into three categories. The first category includes those who have a clear concept of holiness, realize its need and feel the desire to achieve it – but they stop at this point and go no further. You can see this from their lives. It is one thing to know and desire holiness and quite another thing to practice it. It is true that St. Teresa urges us to have great desires – but she means effective desires, desires accompanied by actions. The members of this first category live lives of abundant grace that they never use – at the end their hands are empty.

The second category consists of those who are not satisfied with simple desires; in their own fashion they take the first steps on the path of holiness. But they are not generous, they are attached to their little comforts, they lack the courage to experience total poverty; they make compromises with God. They study and work but they don't overdo it; they obey – up to a point; they pray when it is absolutely necessary. In short they are satisfied with being good and are not eager to become saints. In this category you find the unreliable: those who try to correspond to grace, who love prayer and virtue but as soon as they encounter an obstacle, a spiritual or physical setback, they lose courage and never get beyond their good intentions.

The third category comprises those who do everything possible to become saints, they admit no delay and persevere in their commitment. They enter the Congregation with the proper motivation; they fully intend to respond generously to God's grace; they ignore nothing that might lead them to holiness. They are strong, constant, generous people who have a goal – becoming saints. With unalloyed trust in God they move straight ahead in the midst of trials. The thought of what the saints and even more the Lord Jesus endured supports them in the dark hours they will surely experience. St. Ignatius says of them: "With great and generous hearts they bring all their enthusiasm to the service of God." This is how we become saints. It's not really so difficult. I am happy to believe that many of you are in this third category – and for this I thank the Lord. It's not that the members of this third category won't encounter setbacks, periods and even days without enthusiasm but they are determined to improve, to respond to grace and to become saints. Examine yourself before God: in which category do you fit? As religious and missionaries you have the duty to strive for holiness and therefore all of you should be in the third category.

### **Attitudes on the path to holiness**

**11. Total, forceful and constant will.** After reflecting on the reasons why we should become saints we will now turn our attention to the attitudes or dispositions necessary for someone seriously striving for holiness. The first of these is desire: the total, forceful and constant will to become a saint. A "total" will is one that sets no limits and fears no excess. Some may be afraid to be canonised but this is not something to worry about – the future is not in our hands; maybe others may possibly see to it. What we must strive to achieve is holiness worthy of canonisation. Let no one say: "I am satisfied with being good; I'll leave the heroism to others." No, No! Life in this house is the same for everyone – and it is a life that leads to holiness. It is not presumptuous to strive for holiness even great holiness. But it would be presumptuous to imagine we could achieve

holiness without God's help. If we put limits on our quest for holiness or measure our response to grace we will never even achieve ordinary holiness. One does not bargain with the Lord: it is all or nothing. Either we will become saints as He intends or we will not become saints at all.

The one with a "forceful" will is the one who says: "I want with all my strength and will strive to become a saint; I will take no chance of failing to achieve this goal." Then the Lord will help. Weak will and halfhearted resolve will never succeed in anything. They will not even begin to tread the path of holiness – they are spiritually lazy and wishy-washy. The sluggard wills and doesn't will (Cf. Proverbs 13,4). Today yes – tomorrow no. They mistake whim for will. They will pursue holiness as long as no effort or sacrifice is involved.

The one with a "constant" will is the one who never loses courage. Instability is, unfortunately, natural for us. We are so created that we need constant nudging. The least little setback can discourage us: a dry spell, a sacrifice that asks more than we are willing to give. This is all we need to give up on the path to holiness. During her long years of absolute aridity St. Teresa of Avila not only did not give up her vocation but sacrificed none of her goals either. And how many trials did St. Margaret Mary Alacoque endure? Her life was a series of trials – each more painful than the previous. But she did not give up; she overcame each trial with heroic perseverance. If these women could persevere through great sufferings can we not persevere when faced with the little setbacks that require the small acts of fidelity that lead to holiness. The grace of God that came to the aid of these holy women – and to all the saints – will come to our assistance; we too will achieve the highest degree of sanctity.

**12. Trust in God.** This is the secret of all the saints: trust God and mistrust ourselves; do not lose courage because of our limitations or the fact that the goal seems to recede into the distance. We must never lose confidence but have trust whatever the circumstances. We must persevere in the will to love God and serve Him with perfection and not let our failings destroy our confidence. St. Philip Neri used to walk through the streets of Rome crying out: "I am hopeless, I am hopeless!" To whoever asked what he was talking about he would reply, "I have no faith in myself, but I trust totally in God!"

If lack of self-confidence leads to discouragement it is an obstacle that can block our progress on the path of righteousness. Without confidence we are like birds whose wings have been clipped – birds that cannot fly.

Let us pray that the Lord make us fully aware of our nothingness. We should not pretend to be more wicked than we actually are. If we are cocky it is because we don't really know ourselves. Only the mediocre and the second rate are self-important. Knowing one's own nothingness and not being over-confident should underpin our trust in God. We should never be discouraged by our unwanted weakness – we should cling to Him, abandon ourselves to Him. He not only wants to make us saints but He can do all things. He can even build holiness on our weakness as long as – and I repeat – we have a sincere desire and a firm will to respond to His grace.

**13. Training our character.** Growth in holiness requires constant effort and the generous, good will to train our character and learn virtue. It takes time to achieve genuine virtue. With time and repetition we develop good habits – these are virtues – and with the exercise of virtue we become saints.

Others in the community may think of us as envious, stubborn or short-tempered and we are the only ones who do not or will not recognize this. No one should blame his lack of progress in perfection on his personality. The fault is more likely laziness; no personality by itself blocks our striving for or achieving holiness. Saints come in all sizes and sorts – every kind of personality. Some people excuse their shortcomings by saying "That's just the way I am." This is no excuse. We need not destroy our personality only reshape it. Though it may be a long and difficult process it is

something we must do if we want to improve and not be a burden to others. We must examine ourselves fearlessly and discern our tendencies and weaknesses. If we can overcome one defect we will overcome others as well. A single defect is always rooted in other imperfections.

However imperfect we may at present be if the Lord sees our good will He will gradually fill the void and provide us with an abundance of gifts. If we are determined to struggle against our defects Our Lady will cover them with her ample mantle.

### **Obstacles on the path to holiness**

**14. False motivations.** Several things can block our commitment to holiness; above all, an improper goal. The Lord will not bless one who enters the Congregation for dishonest reasons; progress in holiness would be impossible – just as seed sown in bad ground will not take root. This holds true if the reasons for entering – though not dishonest - do not correspond to the Congregation’s own aim. Here the Lord gives his grace to those who are called to be Consolata Missionaries.

**15. Dissipation.** Another obstacle is dissipation or thoughtlessness – the result of a worldly spirit. A spirit as far from holiness as light is from darkness or fire from cold. The Lord asks us to make a clean break: “you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world.” (John 15,19) and He puts the same distance between Himself and the world: “I am not of this world” (John 8,23).

We cannot serve two masters: Jesus and the world. And even less can we strive effectively for holiness if we nurture worldly desires. We are here to become holy, holy missionaries. This and nothing else must be our sole concern. Our ideal is to follow Jesus. To follow Him closely, with love and fidelity – this is what truly leads to holiness, this should be our only concern. Dissipation is like the wind that blows away everything in its path. One may be bodily present but mentally elsewhere. We can pass whole days in a state of distraction, our hearts empty of God, indifferent to things religious, serving God and doing our duty only half-heartedly. In such a state how can we possibly pray well or live in intimacy with Jesus? How can we become saints? Dissipation is almost always accompanied by flippancy, a tendency to make fun of everything, to avoid spiritual or profitable discussion out of human respect or the fear of appearing unusual. All this makes us overlook everything in our surroundings that could lead to holiness.

**16. Lukewarmness.** Being lukewarm too is an obstacle on the path to holiness. We are lukewarm when we waver between vice and virtue, when we want to fight sin and remain faithful but never really get started – it is too much of an effort. Lukewarmness shows itself in various ways: we commit venial sin repeatedly, deliberately and without much concern; we skip or cut short our prayers; praying becomes a habit that engages neither our mind nor our heart; we have no respect or love for our state in life – it’s almost as if we regret the choices we have made; we are more interested in worldly than spiritual pursuits. Lukewarmness is extremely dangerous and damaging! Listen to the words addressed to the Angel of the Church of Laodicea: “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth” (Apocalypse 3,15-16).

**17. Indolence.** In the process of seeking perfection indolence is an obstacle akin to lukewarmness. Our weak human nature quickly loses its initial fervor and we start going backwards. This kind of listlessness shows itself in many ways: we are lackadaisical in observing the rule or taking part in community life; we quickly find excuses when mistaken or corrected; we belittle or make fun of other people’s fervor – it threatens us; we ignore the grace or inspiration God offers us; we do our work without enthusiasm or just to get it done; we are less than energetic in our efforts to overcome

passion or achieve holiness.

**18. Destructive criticism.**<sup>5</sup> Destructive criticism, grumbling about superiors or confrères can prove an obstacle on our path to holiness. This is an ugly habit and I don't want to see it in our Congregation. Some people resent authority and always see superiors in a negative light: they complain, judge and murmur. This is nothing but pride – unadulterated pride. Anyone with this attitude is not going to accomplish miracles in mission. I don't mean that you should be disinterested in the community. No, the Congregation's welfare or misfortune concerns all of us. If you think something is going wrong you should report it to the person in charge – this is a duty and an act of charity. But complaining in secret – no! Those communities where this attitude exists are indeed unfortunate. It is the beginning of the end. This is something I cannot repeat often enough. Let us pray that Jesus will make us humble of heart and spirit; let us pray Our Lady, the Consolata, that she will keep this curse – the spirit of criticism - far from our Congregation. Then all will be well; the Lord will bless the Congregation's activities and they will prosper.

**19. Disunity.** Another obstacle on the path to holiness is partiality or disunity – the impossibility of bringing our diversity into harmony. Not infrequently this shortcoming is born of envy or jealousy. Feelings of envy cannot always be avoided but once they occur we must control them instantly lest they turn into hostility. We are all equals. There should be no distinction because of our origin; there should be no favoritism – we should be of one heart, in perfect unity. You are all brothers and sisters who must live together your whole life long. For the sake of fraternal charity do not expect that others will be without defects. We must correct our own faults and put up with those of others.

**20. Obstinacy.** Another obstacle is stubbornness: clinging to our own ideas, the need to be right all the time, the need to dominate, the inability to admit mistakes. If we do not struggle against this kind of obstinacy we will never make progress on the path to perfection. Anyone who believes he is already perfect is a gravely mistaken and unhappy individual.

**21. Venial Sins.** Venial sins constitute the greatest obstacle on the path to holiness. Some venial sins are the result of our weakness: an unconscious reaction or a sudden flare-up of impatience, etc. These are weaknesses we must live with. If the will is in no way involved they are not even sins. We cannot entirely free ourselves from these shortcomings without God's help. If we pay more attention to our behavior and serve God with greater fervor we can however reduce their number or willfulness. These weaknesses will not stop us from becoming saints; on the contrary they can become means to an end. They can reinforce our humility and bring us closer to God in love and trust – they can help our progress on the path of holiness.

Genuine venial sins involve an act of the will. For example, I may be well aware that nursing resentment against my neighbor is wicked and yet I do nothing to overcome it. I may realize that something I am saying is not true but I say it anyway. When these sins become a habit, when they are frequent and committed without a second thought we have reached the lowest level of lukewarmness; we have abandoned any effort to achieve perfection. The best thing we can do is wake up, pay attention to our passions, words and actions and pursue virtue courageously. We must repeat over and over: Yes. I want to save myself, I want to become a saint and since I am a committed religious and missionary I have all the means I need to make this wish a reality.

**22. Temptations.** All these obstacles to holiness can be temptations from the devil. Temptations are

<sup>5</sup> In the past the word "criticism" in works of ascetical theology had negative connotations. It was the equivalent of "denigration." Here we have added the adjective "destructive" to eliminate any ambiguity.

tricks the devil employs to lure us into sin and frustrate our efforts to achieve eternal happiness. What St. Paul and St. Peter have to say may help us keep vigilant: “Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes” (Ephesians 6,11); “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5,8). The Lord's ways are inscrutable. He permits the devil to tempt us but never more than we can withstand. “And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it” (1 Corinthians 10,13). To overcome temptation we must be vigilant, avoid dangerous occasions and quickly seek God's help with humility and confidence. We must recommend ourselves to Our Lady, our Guardian Angel and all the saints. The Church suggests this prayer: “Visit, we pray You, Father, this dwelling, and drive from it all snares of the enemy: let your holy Angels dwell herein, to keep us in peace; and let your blessing be always upon us.”

## 2 Loved and Called

### The Missionary Vocation

**23. Loved from all eternity.** From all eternity God has been thinking of you. Even though you in no way merited it He loved you. “I have loved you with an everlasting love” (Jeremiah 31,3). I have loved you, you specifically and not someone else.

In His generosity He called you to be an apostle. He needs no one, He needs nothing. He gave this grace to you and not to someone else who may have been more deserving or responsive. And why you specifically? Because He loved you with a special love. He treated you as he did the young man in the Gospel “Jesus looked at him and loved him and said: Come follow Me” (Mark 10,21). A vocation is Jesus’ loving glance.

**24. Love of God and a passion for souls.**<sup>1</sup> The missionary vocation belongs to those who love the Lord very much, wish to make him better known and are ready for any sacrifice. Nothing more is needed. The missionary vocation is an act of Providence: God chooses individuals and endows them with the talents needed to evangelize non-Christian countries or groups.<sup>2</sup> Since the time of the Apostles, the Lord Jesus Christ has entrusted His mission to individuals: “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (John 20,21). The Church knows this and reaffirms this divine mission. Missionaries work in the name of the Church.

Saints have always wanted to go to the missions: St. Francis of Assisi, St. Romuald, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Mary Magdalene de’ Pazzi and St. Therese of the Child Jesus – whom the Church proclaimed patroness of all missions.

**25. A priest is by nature a missionary.** As far as priests are concerned, what difference is there between preaching the Gospel in our country or proclaiming it to non-Christians? Is it not the same vocation? Is not every priest obliged to proclaim the Gospel? Every priest is by nature a missionary. There is no essential difference between the priestly and the missionary vocation. All one needs – and I repeat myself – is a great love of God and a passion for souls. Everyone cannot act on the inclination to go to the missions – but every priest should have this inclination. Working as an apostle in mission territories is the acme of the priestly vocation. A non-clerical religious, brother or sister, especially one working in the missions is a genuine missionary. This is true of our coadjutor brothers and sisters.

**26. The missionary vocation is a gift of God.** According to St. Paul there is a difference between the natural and supernatural gifts of God. To make an individual a saint the Holy Spirit adapts himself to the individual’s nature, strength and capacity. St. Paul teaches that each has his own gift from God (Cf. 1 Corinthians 7,7). For us that gift is the missionary vocation. We will only understand its value in eternity. And if we reject this gift? The Lord calls us to a state of perfection, offers us our own place in the Church, gives us a sign of his favor and if we reject all this? Do you think this is a matter of little consequence? One might say that the Lord’s call is only “advisory.” This is true but is this how we should treat “advice” from God? If St. Francis Xavier had rejected God’s counsel what would he be today? Certainly not a saint.

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<sup>1</sup> Allamano used the phrase “zeal for souls” habitually. We have no desire to detract from the power of these words but we have occasionally substituted “passion for souls” a phrase Allamano knew and sometimes used. Another expression we use that says the same thing is “missionary fervor.” These substitutions represent an effort to make his teaching more contemporary.

<sup>2</sup> Using pre-Vatican II terminology Allamano spoke of “pagan countries;” we prefer the expression “human groups.” Nowadays the use of a geographical expression to define the world of the missions is thought to be more inclusive.



How many “displaced” persons there are in the world who rejected God’s gift! Remember that the first offering I received for the Congregation was 100 Lire from a priest whose name I never knew. He gave me the money to banish his remorse for rejecting the call to work among non-Christians that he felt as a young man.<sup>3</sup> No, we should never believe we are doing God a favor by responding to His call! He is giving us an enormous gift.

**27. Without extraordinary signs.** Sometimes we doubt our call to the apostolate. This painful affliction can destroy vocations or dampen the fervor with which we prepare for the apostolate. Do you really have a vocation? Extraordinary signs are by no means necessary and we should not even expect them. Even if an angel were to come down from heaven it might be a hallucination. There may have been an extraordinary sign and we did not notice it – even though it was foreordained by God: something in a missionary periodical or book, a sermon on the missions, the example of a friend, the word of our pastor or confessor, certain occurrences in the family, etc. These can of themselves be signs. This is the usual way God fosters a missionary vocation among His chosen.

**28. Only for evangelization.** Anyone who enters the Congregation for any reason other than becoming a Consolata Missionary is out of place and will have to render an account to God, the community and our benefactors. The Congregation is not a college or seminary where a variety of vocations evolve – its only purpose is to foster missionary – Consolata Missionary – vocations. If one enters our Congregation with the right intention but then discovers that he has not really got a missionary vocation he should seek the prudent advice of our superiors and then return home or to whatever state he thinks appropriate. Someone with a genuine call from God who fails to respond or take missionary formation seriously is failing in his duty.

### **Response to Our Vocation**

**29. If only you knew what a gift God has given you!** You are indeed fortunate – you who have heard the call of God. Strengthened by prayer and wise counsel you have courageously abandoned your home and comfortable life; with disregard for human opinion or motivation you have entered our Congregation to prepare for a life in the missions.

Let me repeat the words of the Lord: “If you only knew the gift God has given you!” (John 4,10). If you knew the great gift God has given you by calling you to this missionary Congregation! If you appreciate this gift – your vocation – and respond appropriately, Jesus, from the tabernacle, will bestow an abundance of other graces upon you. All of you here present and those who came before you enjoy the same benefits and graces. But will you all persevere in your vocation? It is not enough to be called; it is not enough to respond to the call, nor to enter the Congregation or even go to the missions. Not everyone who is called will persevere; not all who are called will respond appropriately. To persevere – and let no one forget it – is an obligation freely assumed when we entered this state; we are bound by solemn promises. We have a duty to God to whom we made these solemn promises and a duty to ourselves. Only he who has persevered to the very end will hear the God say “Come, good and faithful servant!” (Matthew 25,21).

**30. To respond appropriately.** Your presence in the Congregation is evidence of the hope – and the

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<sup>3</sup> Missiology texts and periodicals from the first half of the last century used the word “infidel” as a simple description of non-Christians without in anyway imputing blame for their status. Allamano used the word in a similar fashion. Allamano did not have a tragic view of humankind’s religious situation and so we have replaced this word (infidel) with other equivalent expressions more in use today: “non-Christians”, “members of other religions” and even occasionally “pagans.”

certainty – that you have a vocation. Now that you have a more intimate knowledge of our Congregation and what the missionary vocation involves you must pray for greater insight; pray that you, your superiors and those charged with your training may determine whether you are called by God and are resolved to respond wholeheartedly to this call. This is the only way you can become authentic missionaries; this is the only way you will overcome the difficulties and dangers of life in the missions.

I urge you to strive for a deeper understanding of and respect for your vocation. Thank the Lord every day for this great gift and ask Him to grant you the strength and constancy to respond worthily to it. “I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received” (Ephesians 4,1). The apostle here is talking about the grace of faith but the same is true with regard to the grace of a missionary vocation. This vocation may not be as necessary as faith but it is a sign of God’s favor. Do not accept this gift passively; respond actively and make it fruitful in this special time when you are preparing for a life in the missions; God will shower you with abundant graces. Be serious, I beg you! You must respond and respond appropriately to the very best of your ability. Do not be lackadaisical but decisive. Better no missionary at all than a half-hearted missionary.

If up to now we have not really done our best – we must begin now: “Nunc coepi!” (Psalm 76,11) I begin now! We must get back on the right path whatever it costs and renew our determination every day. We will never really do enough but we must do what we can. The Lord will take care of the rest, He will fill in the gaps. He knows our weaknesses – all He asks for is our good will. Are you determined to offer yourselves to the Lord, let yourselves be formed in accordance with His heart and one day be holy Consolata Missionaries?

After fifty years in the Congregation one may still be a child – i.e. one may have accomplished nothing. Look closely at your years in community: have they been written in gold, ink or water. Reflect on your response to God’s call: what would a holy missionary have accomplished in all these years? Each of you must ask himself, what will I be in twenty years time? Examine how much your vocation is a response to God’s call. To respond to God’s call is to strive for holiness: this is the primary goal of our Congregation and the primary goal of your vocation.

**31. Right intention.** Why are you here? You will answer: to become missionaries. Anyone who thinks otherwise is mistaken. Our only purpose here is to train missionaries. The first step in responding to our vocation is having the right intention. If anyone has come here does not intend to become a Consolata Missionary – for God’s sake he should leave now! He cannot in conscience remain here. He will be a square peg in a round hole, a bone out of joint. In other words he will harm the others, upset the proper running of the community and make it difficult for us to achieve our common goal. He should either adjust his goals or leave the community.

**32. Great esteem.** Secondly you must esteem your vocation. How often you have heard this vocation praised! Before you entered the Congregation you too thought nothing was more beautiful, more important or holier than this vocation. And for this reason you decided to become missionaries regardless of the cost and to achieve this goal you have made considerable sacrifices. From that time the missionary vocation appeared the most beautiful of callings. How often while reading the Gospel did you not think: if only I had been one of the Apostles! Well, you are. The Lord has given each of you the same command he gave the Twelve: “Go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature” (Mark 16,15). We might say that the Lord has assigned the whole world, all nations and all peoples to missionaries. What greater commission could there possibly be?

Think of all the vocations that bind an individual to the Lord and you will find none more perfect than your own. The Lord has poured out His infinite love in giving you this vocation. He could not possibly have given you a more perfect vocation: He has asked you to continue His own mission: “As the Father has sent me, I also send you” (John 20,21). The very same mission Jesus received

from His Father He passes on to you. And along with this mission He passes on the same divine power: “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and teach all nations” (Matthew 28, 18-19).

**33. With real love.** You must not just respect your state in life – you must love it. In spite of the weaknesses you encounter or that the Lord permits for our growth in virtue we must show this love in what we do. We must love this vocation with our whole heart so that the world’s attractions seem as nothing compared to the beauty and grandeur of our calling. Should someone say to us: “You are talented, you could have made something of yourself in the world, had a career, etc.” We can only repeat the words of St. Paul, “I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ” (Philippians 3,8).

From this love of your vocation there springs spontaneously an equally strong love of our Congregation. You must respect the Congregation and love it. You must feel proud to be a member, proud not just to be missionaries but Consolata Missionaries. The Congregation has taken you to its bosom: it nourishes and prepares you for the missions. Here you will become saints because here and not elsewhere you will find all the grace you need to be saints. Anyone who does not share these sentiments either is not cut out to be a member of this Congregation or has not responded to the grace of his vocation.

The more we think about it the more we will respect the gift of our vocation, and the more we will do to correspond to it. Oh what a paradise it is when a missionary is not caught up in petty things but is alive and awake! You see since I was never able to be a missionary I do all I can so that those who desire this vocation are not held back. Every missionary will shine in heaven like a fixed star surrounded by all the souls he saved during his life as an apostle. If everyone knew or understood what it means to be a missionary everyone would want to be one.

**34. Firm will.** Everyone, but you especially, must show good will. This is the quality that defines your personality and the virtue appropriate to your state in life. The missionary life is continuously beset with sacrifices and trials. We need the strength to withstand adversity and persevere in good. If we hope to have this strength when we are in the missions we must begin to cultivate it now. We must begin now with little sacrifices, fidelity to the rule, punctuality and reliability. We must do this all year long and throughout our years of formation. Only then will we become true missionaries.

I am often tempted to say to all of you: “If you only understood the importance of your vocation! If you would only make an effort, if you only had a little more energy the Lord would meet you halfway and would work miracles through you!” Instead you are so passive, so halfhearted, so ungenerous, so unreliable.

The grace of a vocation is not something you can take up or lay aside as it pleases you. Should your vocation be subject to your whims? Be strong and steadfast in your calling. Canon Giacomo Camisassa<sup>4</sup>, our beloved Vice-Rector, lived his whole life with fierce determination. A priest once

<sup>4</sup> Giacomo Camisassa (1854-1922) was born in Caramagna Piemontese the fifth child of Gabriele Camisassa and Agnese Perlo. After working as an apprentice carpenter he entered the Salesian Oratory in Turin and then the Seminary of Chieri to study philosophy. In 1873 he went to the Turin Theological where his vice-master and spiritual director was Joseph Allamano. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1878 and was later became a professor at the Theology and Canon Law Faculties of Turin. From 1880 he worked alongside Allamano as bursar and then as vice-rector of the Consolata Sanctuary and the Ecclesiastical Residence (Convitto). He worked with Allamano in establishing the Consolata Missionaries in 1901 and the Consolata Missionary Sisters in 1910. Along with Allamano he launched and edited the periodical *La Consolata*. The newsletter was a report on events at the sanctuary and the restorations taking place; later it described the life and development of the Congregation and its missions. From February 1911 to April 1912 Camisassa visited the Kenya missions on behalf of Allamano. For 42 years he was Allamano’s close friend and collaborator. They shared the same ideals. They devised and worked out each of their projects together. Each recognized and respected the other’s special talents. It is only fitting to see Canon Giacomo

said of him: “I always admired his constancy. He was never concerned with what others thought or said, he marched straight ahead!” Do you think he never encountered any difficulties? There were countless problems of all sorts. If we had given up or been discouraged by the obstacles we encountered the Sanctuary would still be in the state of disrepair in which we found it and the Congregation would not yet exist. No, once we discerned the will of God we forged ahead trusting blindly in God’s assistance. I can only hope that each of you would share my feelings for the Vice-Rector. Never forget this man; pray that you may possess only some of his energy.

There are and will always be trials; determination is therefore an absolutely necessary part of your vocation. Before your arrival here what did you think about this state of life? What did you imagine it would be like? A life of serenity and comfort or a life of conflict and sacrifice? Do you think that people in the world have no problems? The very briefest experience to know otherwise; we need only ask people or remember what it was like in our own families. What those in the world endure out of necessity you do for love. I want you to be generous, reliable and persevering in your vocation.

### **Obstacles to cooperation**

**35. Attachment to one’s own will.** Our heart is so conditioned that it must have attachments. If it is attached to the world it will be worldly. If it is attached to God it will be godly. You have made so many sacrifices to quit the world and now you must detach your heart from it. If you are less than generous in this process of detachment you will belong neither to God nor to the world. St. Alphonsus de Liguori places attachment to one’s own as the primary obstacle to total cooperation with one’s vocation. Believe me, we are all willful. “What I want” and “what I do not want” are dominant motifs in the world and are also found in religious and missionary communities. This “weed” is not always immediately apparent – but given time it will sprout. Father Giovanni Semeria<sup>5</sup> wrote: “If a religious works hard and long – but following his own will – it counts for nothing. If he studies to become erudite and learned it is similarly worthless. If one does penance for his sins and manages to correct his vices – this counts for something. If he is diligent and fervent at prayer, humble and modest in speech – this is no small thing. But if for the love of God he renounces his own will – this is much, this is enormous, this is everything.” This, he adds, is a non-physical martyrdom that is much more painful than real martyrdom; this struggle will win us a special award in heaven: a victor’s crown from God; this is the narrow path Jesus spoke about.

Woe to those who go to the missions brimming with self-will. They will do no good wherever they go and wherever they go will not suit them. They would have to create their own assignment and even then would be unsatisfied. They are never happy, they find fault with everything. They are a cross for their communities, a torment for their superiors, a scandal for their confrères and a negative and wasted life for themselves and for the Congregation. Believe me, I know this from experience. I have experienced these types in both the male and female version in our communities – I know what I’m talking about. Woe to those who remained attached to their own will.

To control our self-will we must look to the example and teaching of the Lord Jesus. He made His Father’s will the norm of His entire life. He said as much through the words of the Prophet: “On the scroll of the book it is written about me that I do Your will” (Psalm 40,8). His Father’s will close to His heart: “My God, this I desire, that Your Law be in the depths of my heart” (Psalm 40,9). He found continuous nourishment in His Father’s will: “My food is to do the will of Him who sent me” (John 4,34). Carrying out the Father’s will perfectly is what His mission was all about: “I came

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Camisassa as the co-founder of the Consolata Missionaries and the Consolata Missionary Sisters.

<sup>5</sup> Father Giovanni Semeria (1867-1931) was a prolific Baranabite writer and preacher from Liguria. Allamano invited him to hold a series of conferences – *Nove sabati alla Consolata* [Nine Saturdays at the Consolata Sanctuary]. He was accused of modernism and went abroad. When the First World War broke out he returned to Italy and became a military chaplain (1915-1918). In 1918 he established *L’Opera nazionale del mezzogiorno d’Italia* [National Project for Southern Italy] for war orphans. Allamano makes several references to his book *La Vita Religiosa. Trattato ascetico*, Savona 1896, 320 pp.

down from heaven not to do my will but the will of him who sent me” (John 6,38). His every action conformed to this will: “I seek not my will but the will of him who sent me” (John 5,30). Should not all this lead us to renounce once and for all our own will?

**36. Attachment to possessions and comfort.** The second obstacle to cooperating with our vocation is an attachment to possessions and comfort. Missionaries must renounce even this. In our communities few are detached from their little comforts, indifferent to their food, shelter or clothing. If they could only practice detachment and carry that attitude into the missions how much more good they would accomplish!

Father Giovanni Semeria wrote: “Love of comfort is the companion of lukewarmness. The lukewarm have need of a thousand little things that the fervent would regard with contempt. Facile excuses like “times are changing,” “customs change,” “physically weaker ...” etc are simply that: excuses that allow what should never be permitted.”

This is something we must guard against especially in the missions. We have left our country, relatives, worldly comforts – we have generously sacrificed all this to God. Now we must be careful lest other attachments take their place: self-importance, self-will, love of comfort. Divine Providence will care for you – you will never lack what you need but you must never look for the superfluous. You must become accustomed to local food and not expect your native cuisine.

Certainly when the Lord sent out his disciples to preach He did not provide for them as we do with our missionaries. And yet when He later asked them if they were lacking anything they replied, “Nothing!” This is how it will be for you as well. If perchance you cannot immediately get hold of something you think necessary remember your vow of poverty. The spirit of this vow requires that you feel the effects of poverty and accept them with patience even with joy.

**37. Attachment to relatives.** The world accuses religious and missionaries of two contradictory shortcomings: they have no affection for their relatives or they are too attached to them. The first accusation is false. It is not true that religious and missionaries are hardhearted. They are affectionate, very affectionate indeed; they bring spiritual blessings to their relatives. Parents share in the good their children accomplish: good works, prayer, mortification, etc. Parents and relatives share in all the good religious accomplish in the missions. The holy life religious lead is the cause of countless benefits – even earthly benefits – for their relatives.

We love our parents now more than before and we love them better. We bring them the greatest possible benefit and hence love them more than others. The benefits we earn for them are far more important – spiritual benefits. My mother used to say to me: “All the others may forget me – but you, no; you say Mass and every day you pray for me.” Don’t you see affection for our parents does not diminish? When they are about to die and when they are in heaven they will see how helpful it was to have given a son or daughter to the missions, to the service of God.

The second accusation alas has some grounds in reality. St. Joseph Cafasso said: “Lord help me be detached in those areas where I feel the greatest affection.” This is something all the saints have done. We must be determined to be attached to the Lord and to Him alone. He wants to be the first and the last, the only one in our heart. And he has a right to expect this. If our parents have given us life the Lord is the one who gave it to them. Whoever loves his mother or father more than Him is not worthy of Him. The Lord is jealous for our hearts.

Remember God’s command to Abraham: “Leave your country, your people and your father's household” (Genesis 12,1). Each of you has received a similar invitation: Leave your country, your people and your father's household, bid farewell to everything, everything and come follow me. And you accepted this invitation. And what a reward for Abraham! “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing” (Genesis 12,2).

You will have the same reward. The Lord will make you into a great nation – all the people you have converted to the faith. Your name will be great in heaven you and your whole family will be blessed in time and in eternity.

**38. Trials and temptations.** No one should be surprised if this great gift, a vocation, is subjected to trials and temptations. Often everything goes well in the beginning but then we encounter dryness, boredom, desolation of the spirit ... and suddenly we feel abandoned by God; we are saddened and lose our way. This should not happen! Everyone with an intense spiritual life will encounter spiritual desolation. This will happen regardless of your state in life – even if you live in the world. This is a trial that will purify and perfect the spirit. It is a movement of love on the part of the Lord. One month of dryness may bring us closer to perfection than years of fervor.

Let us pray that the Lord will strengthen us on the path we have chosen; that He will give us the grace to cooperate and persevere until the end. “Confirm, O God, what you have done for us” (Psalm 68,29).

### **3 Formed for Mission**

#### **Missionary Formation**

**39. Formation here and now.** The majority of religious congregations enjoyed a period of initial fervor. Members were intent on their own sanctification and combined solid virtue and apostolic zeal. They displayed the unity and harmony that are sure signs of charity. But they did not all continue at the same level of fervor – the spirit of the world entered and gained the upper hand. What can we say about our Congregation? It will survive, but we may ask will it retain its initial fervor? This is a grace we must constantly seek of the Lord. Woe to us if we lose this early fervor; it is easier to found a Congregation than it is to renew one. If one day our Congregation should lose its original spirit I hope to make myself heard from heaven!

The purpose of this house is your formation. The Lord has laid out rules, appointed people to train you and provided all the grace you need. If you take these things seriously and remain docile you will receive day by day, hour by hour this shower of grace. You will be the success the Lord hopes for and you will achieve the goal of your vocation.

“In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you. I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation!” (II Corinthians 6,2). St. Paul defines the time of the Gospel as the “acceptable time” – a time we must seize with gratitude and love. The Church applies these words to the period of Lent. I address the same words to you and apply them to the grace of your vocation and the time you spend learning priestly, religious and missionary virtues.

Think about it: this is your opportunity. Remember what St. Jerome – who lived so long in Jerusalem – said: “It is not living in Jerusalem that is important, it is living a holy life.” This house is your Jerusalem. It is not enough that you have come here, remain and live here – just as it is not enough to call yourselves missionaries: what is really important is that you learn how to live the missionary spirit. But to do this, and I can never repeat it enough, you cannot wait until you are in the missions. Each day is the “time of God’s favor.” It is here and now that you must begin your formation. Anyone who thinks he can wait until he is in the missions to become a saint is mistaken. No, No! If you are not saints here, if you are not saints before you leave, you will never be saints. Believe me on the missions you will only harvest what you have sown. Unhappy is the individual who finds formation tiresome and takes no delight in his own training. I repeat, let yourselves be formed, love the guidance and correction; seek out the perfection set forth by the Congregation! This should be your common motivation: value time and don’t waste a second. If you do this now you will profit in the future.

Be faithful to the graces and inspirations God gives you. The Lord is often knocking on the door of your heart. You must be ready to open the door to him immediately. We have many occasions to make small sacrifices and if we make them generously we will soon encounter occasions to make greater and greater sacrifices until we achieve heroic virtue.

**40. The spirit of our Congregation.** In this Congregation you must become what, with the Lord’s inspiration, I have envisioned; I am sometimes frightened by the responsibility I bear – I really want the members of our Congregation to be perfect and to lead a perfect life. I believe we must do what is good and do it well. Otherwise with my already many obligations I would not have undertaken the added responsibility of founding this Congregation. I want to exploit and apply my life-long experience of community to our two Congregations.

You pay attention to my commands, exhortations and even the simple wishes which you all know. Here is what I would like from you: good will and a generous, unflagging effort to absorb the spirit of the Congregation. Act in such a way that you can say with St. Paul, “I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2,20). This is because the Spirit of the Lord has so pervaded his being that

he was totally transformed. Renew yourselves in the spirit of the mind (Cf. Ephesians 4,23) so that you become new persons replete with all the virtues of the Lord.

You are men and women Consolata Missionaries. But are you this only in name? Show that you are authentic missionaries, that you have the spirit of the Congregation and that you lead lives that every day and every hour conform to that spirit. The spirit gives form and life to an institution and to its individual members. Every institution has its own spirit - of which and for which it lives. Individuals are vital members of a Congregation to the extent that they possess its spirit. Whoever wants to absorb the spirit of our Congregation completely must begin now and not waste time.

**41. In thought, word and deed.** Are the thoughts you entertain during the day worthy of missionaries? Do you think constantly of the reason you came to our Congregation? In other words, are you eager to become saints? Can you say with St. Paul that your thoughts are the “thoughts of Christ?” (Cf. I Corinthians 2,16).

Are your words, your conversations worthy of a missionary? You must speak often of spiritual and useful subjects; you must help each other to grow in virtue and knowledge. On the contrary, so often your conversations are utterly banal! ... It is all wasted time, my beloved, wasted formation time. If only one of you had the courage to take the first step but alas no one dares. And yes, secretly each of you would be happy if this were to happen. This concern for your formation is very close to my heart. I would want your conversations to be always worthy of holy missionaries.

With regard to your deeds – you must examine yourself often. The actions of a good Christian are not enough, yours must be the actions of a good missionary. If a good Christian ought to disdain comfort how much more missionaries must forsake such vanity. The same is true about devotion, work and all the other virtues. Your habit and words are not enough to make you missionaries – there must be deeds. Deeds bear witness before the world. You must have the spirit of Consolata Missionaries in your thoughts, words and deeds.

**42. With the leadership of your superiors and formators.**<sup>1</sup> Superiors and those in charge of formation are sentinels God placed in the Congregation to promote and preserve its fervor and spirit. This is both a great service and a grave responsibility.

Our first responsibility as superiors is to pray for you. We think of you at Mass and recommend you to the Holy Spirit. We pray that He will grant you the strength to overcome obstacles in your daily struggle against shortcomings; we pray that He will further give you the gift of piety that you may become genuine men and women of prayer. Our second responsibility as superiors is to be present, caring and vigilant in the community. This is a serious responsibility: the life, success or failure of the community depends on it. St. Paul placed care for the Churches before all his other responsibilities (Cf. II Corinthians 11,28).

Our third responsibility is to leave no mistake uncorrected. Like choir directors we can let no false note go by or think it too insignificant to notice. I remember the instructions given to me by Archbishop Lorenzo Gastaldi<sup>2</sup> when he sent me to the seminary. “There are two things I

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<sup>1</sup> During Allamano's times those in charge of formation in the seminaries were simply called “superiors.” Undoubtedly superiors have responsibility for formation in their communities. Being Allamano a great formator himself, in order to make more explicit his use of the term “superior” as one involved in formation, we have frequently changed it into “formator” as its synonym.

<sup>2</sup> Lorenzo Gastaldi (1815-1882) Archbishop of Turin was an active, zealous apostle and a man of great learning. He was a Doctor in theology, a member of the University of Turin Theological College and a Canon of the Church of the Holy Trinity. In 1851 he entered the Rosminians and was sent to England by Rosmini himself. He worked in England for ten years. For reasons of poor health he left the Rosminians in 1862 and entered the diocese. He was elected Bishop of Saluzzo in 1862 and took part in the First Vatican Council where he defended Papal Infallibility with fervor and intelligence. When the Archiepiscopal See of Turin fell vacant Pius IX, on the advice of Don Bosco, named him Archbishop. Gastaldi thought highly of Allamano and appointed him assistant and then spiritual director



recommend: first great charity – never say a harsh word or anything that could offend or make the young man think you do not respect him. Second, never let a mistake go by without correcting it.” This is what a superior or mentor’s responsibility amounts to.

When I was the seminary spiritual director I was often tempted to escape from so much responsibility and with you the responsibility is even greater and more enduring. I feel personally responsible for all of you, for your becoming saints and for the salvation of so many souls. I want to come before God with the assurance that I have done my duty as a mentor of missionaries and to the extent that my limited strength will permit I would like to do this duty.

God has sent me, your superiors and your teachers to lead you. It is up to us to discern your vocation and to train you in the authentic spirit of the Congregation as Consolata Missionaries. We must one day render an account to God on how we have carried out this special mission and if we have been faithful ministers and dispensers of the grace we have received and passed on to you. Woe to us if fear of offending you has kept us from being faithful channels of grace. The road you must follow is the one we point out. If we are channels of God’s grace for you it stands to reason that no one else, be he priest, layman, saint or more learned than us, should interfere or advise you. God will only ask you if you have obeyed me and those who act in my name. I hope that all of you have good will and will allow yourselves to be taught.

**43. With an open and trusting heart.** Here all must be love. Love your superiors and formators who endure so much on your behalf – your affection will comfort them. They should be respected regardless of their personal qualities – but only insofar as each in his own area of responsibility serves as God’s representative. Do you possess this spirit of practical faith?

Allow me to insist on the need for trust in your superiors and formators. We are all members of one family.<sup>3</sup> In well-ordered families children think it a duty to confide their thoughts, feelings, problems and successes to their parents and seek their help. You are the children and superiors and formators are your parents in the Lord. They are at your side day and night; they think, pray and work on your behalf and are aware of the responsibility they bear before the Congregation, the Church and God. Therefore your hearts should be open – like children with their parents. This and nothing else is what we hope to achieve. Never forget that superiors and formators have special grace from God to lead you and form you in the holiness required of your estate.

Believe me, without openness it is difficult to respond worthily to your calling; your superiors and formators constitute a channel through which God’s grace reaches your soul. I think I can say that the good or bad health of a religious community depends on the extent to which this trust exists.

In our communities there are individuals who practice what they hear, they make an effort to follow the rule, they are serene and ... Thank God! They do this all year long. But then there are others – perhaps the majority – for whom openness with superiors and teachers is a genuine need and an absolute necessity if they are to make rapid and sure progress in their growth as religious and missionaries otherwise they will lose courage when faced with difficulties.

Let me say this in conclusion: nobody has ever been sorry that he trusted his superiors or formators. On the contrary many regret – but too late – that they ignored this powerful tool of formation. It would have taken just an act of humility to reveal one’s problems and sufferings; and it would have taken just a word from our leaders to save a vocation that is now forever lost. Blessed is he who understands and puts these principles into practice. When I am in heaven I will bless you even

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of the seminary as well as rector of the Consolata Sanctuary shortly after his ordination. Allamano was only twenty-nine years old. Gastaldi trusted Allamano to reopen the Ecclesiastical Residence (*Convitto* - for training young priests) at the Consolata Sanctuary. He appointed Allamano to teach moral theology. All his life long Allamano revered this man, his Archbishop.

<sup>3</sup> We are well aware of the problems that arise from the concept of “family” in certain cultural contexts but we are preserving Allamano’s terminology and thought in this area because they represent a tradition in our Congregations and reflect exactly the Magisterium of the Church.

more; I will always be looking down at you ...

**44. In simplicity and sincerity.** Simplicity eliminates duplicity from one's soul; it does not seek its own advantage but only the glory of God and the benefit of one's neighbor. This virtue is a great secret that endears us to God. The Lord says, "Be simple as doves" (Matthew 10,16) and He urges us to become as little children to enter the Kingdom. Here in this place we must learn the spirit of simplicity. The simple person thinks, speaks and works with candor.

If we seek (and we should) only God's will and our own improvement we must reveal everything (except sin) to our superiors and formators. They will show us God's will and will keep us from pursuing a path God does not favor. Instead of seeking every means possible to be open and seek help to improve and perfect ourselves we make an effort to hide and cover up our weaknesses. This is not how the saints behaved. If we act like children who say everything they think we will be all right. Do not worry if others know your defects they can help you overcome them. Be straightforward, be simple without ambivalence ... What is, is. Remember that the Lord does not work in muddy waters. Let what is in your heart be on your lips. Truth is truth and we must love it. This is what I want to see: a pure spirit, precise and clear; you should be on the outside what you are on the inside.

**45. Quality.** The Lord has sent vocations to our Congregation and if we maintain our good spirit He will send more; the Congregation is His work as are vocations. May the Lord continue to send us candidates – but first class candidates. This is what I want: few candidates but good ones, ones in order: they should have spirit; they should be both willing and capable of working for others. It is not quantity but quality that counts – quality and spirit. Numbers can be important if they are accompanied by quality.

What do I care if there are 50 or 100 young people in training if they are not the right sort? How often have you heard me say: Woe to those who throw the doors wide open! Woe to those who are afraid of sending candidates away! I keep saying the same things but I repeat myself because our numbers – if not accompanied by the necessary quality – frighten me. It is not as easy to train many well as it is to train a few. I have said it before and I repeat: better fewer candidates but first-rate candidates. And if someone who has not yet made perpetual vows feels he cannot continue on the right path it would be better if he left. It would be better for him, for the Congregation and for the missions.

**46. Don't rush your departure.** You are fragile plants in the Church's garden and the Lord wants you to grow properly, straight and healthy. For this reason you must be cared for. Put all your heart into this effort. Happy is the individual who is well prepared. To acquire solid, full-blown, strong virtue you need time.

Don't rush your departure for the missions. It is only natural that you feel a strong urge to leave for the missions – this is the reason you came here and the goal towards which you are striving. This is what your formation in the Congregation is preparing you for. As I always say, your heart should be in the missions. But at the same time your desire should be accompanied by a healthy caution. It is not enough to want to leave for the missions you must be prepared for this undertaking – both intellectually and spiritually. Are you prepared? Don't deceive yourselves: it is here that you must be formed in virtue. In the missions the tree will produce its fruits: you will be patient, generous and disdainful of comfort if you have learned all these things in formation, if they have become a habit. This is the proper caution possessed by all who have a good spirit and understand the value of the apostolate.

Get rid of the obsession with rushing! I would recommend calm and patience so that you can

prepare yourselves well. It is better to do something slowly and well. There is no point in having much land to cultivate if you lack the workers or if the workers you have are not fit. We need capable, well-trained workers. I would like these thoughts to take root in your mind. A desire to go to the missions – yes – but coupled with a healthy concern that we be sufficiently prepared. The Church does not need so many subjects – it can continue its mission without them. It does, though, need learned and spiritually formed apostles. No one is indispensable but all are useful. The same thing can be said about our Congregation.

### **Formation for an ordered life**

**47. Involvement and collaboration of all.** Discipline<sup>4</sup> is important because it promotes the individual's formation and the organization of the community. It covers a wide range that includes punctuality in carrying out one's duties, faithfulness to the rule and customs of the community, good manners, etiquette, etc.

In former times a paterfamilias like the patriarchs of old used to gather his older and more experienced offspring to discuss family matters. They would speak of the past, the present and the future; they would discuss how family affairs were progressing, how they could be improved and what ought to be corrected in the family. I knew a father like this and I knew how well things went in his household. There was agreement and commitment! This is what we should do as well and this is why I am always so happy to be in your company. We must get to know and understand each other intimately. We should consider the present and ask: Are things going well in our community? ... Could they improve? ... What should we do about this? ... What pitfalls should we avoid? ... The future of the Congregation depends on the present.

As missionaries the Lord expects you to be involved and interested in the common welfare. Remember for something to be genuinely good it must be complete. Generally one who is not orderly in his activities is not orderly in his thinking or anything else. As I have said before good must be done well and this is true of our vocation: we must do better every day and with enthusiasm. It is not so much the action itself that counts but the spirit with which we perform it. This is how our community should be: orderly in activity and filled with a good spirit.

**48. It's up to me as well.** We are all in this together and have an interest in everything going on in this house – as if every inch of it belonged to us. We need order for our own sake and for the good of all; each of us should feel we are members of a living body; we should work in unison for the good of all like the members of a human body. Don't we all have the same goal? Yes, the same goal and the identical motivation: that our community, our Congregation should progress, prosper and accomplish its mission. No one should say, "it's not my concern" – it's everyone's concern. With the excuse that "it's not up to me" you will bump into a chair out of place and not think to put it back where it belongs, or see a piece of paper on the floor and not pick it up, or hear a window or door banging and not close it. First of all we must do our own tasks and do them well, thoroughly and enthusiastically. Then we must be concerned about everything else as well.

**49. Not only maintain but love discipline.** Discipline should not just be maintained it should be loved. If you don't love discipline it will be almost impossible to maintain it and perform our tasks cheerfully and with determination. I think it is not so much its material observance that is lacking as it is the love of discipline. Consequently while we all do the same things some enjoy their work

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<sup>4</sup> In the usage common to his time Allamano used the word "discipline" to cover a variety of attitudes from observing the rules (regularity) to the way one treated other people. These attitudes could be summed up: "to be faithful in an ordered fashion in one's own life." Discipline did not so much refer to an external conformity to rules or obligations as to an internal fidelity to one's commitments. To avoid distorting Allamano's thought we have preserved the word "discipline" but it must be understood in the light of these observations.

because they do it with love while others unable to avoid work think of it as a burden.

The observance of discipline certainly costs us something. We must work on our own will and cleanse it totally of all our disordered tendencies. This costs us – but love can make it sweet and bearable. Do not forget the Holy Spirit's warning: "Unhappy is the man who disdains discipline" (Wisdom 3,11). While he who maintains discipline lovingly enjoys perfect peace. Instead of aspiring to do the impossible do what you must do and do it well and do it in the time, place and way prescribed; not sporadically following each day's whim but always, every day and all day long. This is the spirit of discipline! Discipline is necessary above all in the missions – it must be considered a duty and maintained lovingly. Given the circumstances in which mission work is done an undisciplined act can cause disorder and harm to evangelization.

**50. Good manners and sensitivity.** Apart from every other consideration, discipline – in this case good manners – is necessary for the apostolate. A missionary without good manners will never win respect and will have difficulty doing anything worthwhile good for people.

Good manners are equally necessary for safeguarding charity. In our communities as in families and society at large there must be mutual respect. Good manners will make us more sensitive; we will think of ourselves with humility and avoid offending others. We will defer to others and show gratitude. Good manners may help us practice charity but charity can turn good manners into something noble. Charity exists where good manners prevail. Communities with good manners can more easily practice mutual charity. What begins with a rude word can end up with an attack on charity. This is why I would hope to see great sensitivity in our midst. Each of us should examine himself to see if he is guilty of anything that undermines sensitivity. I want you to practice this delicate charity so that our community can be genuinely sensitive.

And how do we become refined and polite? By self-examination and correcting any defect which leads to poor manners. Believe me time spent on self-examination is time well spent. We must examine ourselves and look for anything unbecoming a person with good manners or anything offensive to others. Ultimately we become refined and polite through fraternal correction. At times we don't recognize our less refined habits and it is an act of charity if others point them out. Shortcomings in manners are little things we should call to each other's attention.

Good manners are something I think really important that I will continue to emphasize. I want our community to be refined. Together with piety and an eagerness to learn I want our communities to be marked by good manners. I want everything done well, with dignity, moderation and sensitivity. I will never permit anything rude here. Certainly good manners, as St. Bernard notes, do not constitute religious perfection but they certainly foster perfection. Good manners are to virtue as flowers are to fruit. They are only flowers but they give promise of fruit in the future. If we act accordingly the Lord will bless us and our community will be a well ordered community. Our Lady, the Consolata, is sensitive and she would want her sons and daughters to be equally sensitive.

**51. Mastery of self and modest behavior.** Modesty - reserve and dignity - should characterize our behavior "from the hair on our head to the soles of our shoes" as St. Joseph Cafasso used to say. The great virtue of modesty is born of self-mastery and presupposes the existence of other virtues: patience, meekness, humility, etc. It requires unceasing self-control. God is invisible but He makes Himself seen through us; not just in our virtues but also in our behavior. Practice modesty not just for its own sake but also for the witness it bears to others.

How does one acquire modesty? - primarily through practice of the Presence of God. God is always at hand and He sees us. We must learn to live in His Presence and then whether alone or with others we will behave with reserve and dignity. We must frequently examine ourselves to determine if we are in any way immodest; if so we must ruthlessly change our ways. Yes, I want you to love modesty.

This is what discipline involves. Let us love and maintain it. For us it is like God's Law and should inspire everything we do all day long. It is written: "Great peace to all who love Your Law" (Psalm 118,165). These words have always been dear to my heart. Remember abundant peace comes only from love or an observance that is born of love.

### **Study and work formation**

**52. The need for knowledge.** Holiness is not all you need as missionaries, you need knowledge too. Piety may be sufficient for the formation of a hermit, but one who proclaims the Gospel must have both knowledge and piety. A genuine apostle is knowledgeable. You should see study as necessary for your mission. Mediocre intellectual preparation is just not good enough – you need genuine knowledge. An ignorant missionary is a sad and bitter sight.

The need for knowledge is apparent from Scripture. In the Old Testament we read in the prophet Malachi: "For the priest's lips ought to safeguard knowledge, his mouth is where the law should be sought, since he is Yahweh's messenger" (Malachi 2,7). People sought truth from the priests and presumably the priests possessed it. The Prophet Hosea writes: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you that you shall be no priest to Me" (Hosea 4,6). In the New Testament the Lord says to His disciples: "Go therefore and teach all nations" (Matthew 28,19). If we are to teach others we must first be knowledgeable ourselves. This is why St. Paul wrote to Timothy: "Look well to yourself and your teaching and persevere in these things" (I Timothy 4,16).

St. Francis de Sales speaks of knowledge as the eighth sacrament. And you know what St. Teresa said: if forced to choose between a learned but not too pious confessor and a pious confessor who was not too learned she would, for her own peace of mind, choose the learned confessor. We cannot expect infused knowledge – something that occurred with the apostles who spent three years living with Jesus. Believe me, your success will depend on how much you have studied or failed to study.

A missionary without knowledge is like a lamp without light. For this reason you must be as broadly knowledgeable as possible. Everything here is designed for your intellectual and spiritual formation. At the end of his apprenticeship everyone who has made a genuine effort will discover himself well prepared for whatever mission the Lord gives him. Remember the slogan: Repetition helps [Repetita iuvant]. We must review our studies. The first time we study something we understand it; the second time we begin to assimilate it and the third time – we relish it.

**53. Language study.** I would especially recommend the study and practice of languages so that you can communicate with people. What is the purpose of philosophy, theology and so many other things if you are unable to communicate what you have studied? If you speak languages poorly you will have little success and will soon lose the incentive to evangelize or you will evangelize without enthusiasm or conviction. Therefore: first philosophy, then theology, Holy Scripture and immediately after these: languages. I think this is one sign of a missionary vocation in our Congregation.

Our letters from missionaries all complain about one thing: they do not know the native languages sufficiently well to begin immediately to proclaim the Gospel. This should not be the case with you! Be really committed to language study. When an individual does all he can to learn the Lord will give him the gift of tongues promised to the apostles. When we sent the first Kikuyu dictionary and grammar (composed entirely by our missionaries) to Rome Cardinal Gaetano De Lay wrote a long letter of congratulations. He compared our missionaries to Sts. Cyril and Methodius who were the first to commit a Slavic language to writing. In a sense our missionaries gave new life to the Kikuyu language.

It is not enough to study the grammar of a language – you must practice speaking it. Anyone not

interested in studying languages will have a hard time being a missionary. This is why I insist on the need to study languages – for missionaries it is an absolute necessity.

**54. Study for the evangelisation.** You must study with humility, enthusiasm, moderation and piety. With humility: we will talk about this at length when we discuss the virtue of faith. With enthusiasm: this means studying in depth without wasting time. With moderation: this means studying neither more nor less than is necessary – you should never think time subtracted from study by obedience is wasted time. Here in this place everything is done for the sake of the missions.

Study especially with piety: for a missionary everything leads to piety – even study. Msgr. Edoardo Pulciano complained when he was a seminarian that there was a barrier between school and chapel. How can we study the sacrament of Baptism without feeling a surge of gratitude for this gift we in no way deserved? How can we study the Eucharist without making a spiritual communion? How can we study Penance without thanking the Lord for the many times we have received and will yet receive this sacrament?

Studying with piety involves turning to the Lord for the light of understanding. St. Thomas tells us he learned more at the foot of the crucifix than in his books. Study with devotion; study as if you were in church. The Curé of Ars always studied in the sacristy so he could be near the Lord. During St. Francis de Sales lifetime there was a saying: “If you want to debate an adversary go here or there but if you want to convert him go to the Bishop of Geneva.”

We study to become saints and to serve the Congregation and the missions. Do not study for human reasons. Never forget that everything you do, you do for the sake of proclaiming the Gospel. Repeat constantly the words of the psalmist “Teach me good judgment and discernment” (Psalm 119,66).

**55. Work, duty and honor.** A missionary must be known for his love of work. Whoever cannot put up with manual labor does not have the missionary spirit. Our spirit must be one of prayer and work – intellectual and manual work. In work be active, in prayer be contemplative.

Work is a duty but it is also an honor; it was made holy by the Holy Family. Until He was thirty years old Jesus worked with St. Joseph as a humble carpenter. Mary too did not spend her life on her knees praying. She worked hard keeping house in Nazareth. While committed to preaching St. Paul worked to provide for himself and others: “And we still toil unto weariness, working hard with our own hands” (I Corinthians 4,12). We read in the Acts of the Apostles that St. Paul “met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently arrived from Italy with Priscilla his wife ... And Paul went to see them, and because he was of the same occupation, he stayed with them; and they worked together, for they were tentmakers by trade” (Acts 18,2-3). Cardinal G. Massaia<sup>5</sup> used to patch his own clothes and make rope sandals for the people he preached to and the Benedictines and the other monks did the same thing for the barbarians they hoped to convert. A first-hand experience of work is no less necessary than any other knowledge and this is especially true in the missions.

Anyone who does not know how or who does not have the will to work does not have a missionary vocation. If you arrive in the missions and do not know how to speak the language what will you do? Start working and while working with the people you will learn the language. Anyone who says

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<sup>5</sup> Guglielmo Massaia (1809-1889) was born in Piovà (Asti) and became a Capuchin at Turin in 1826. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1832 and became chaplain at the Ospedale Mauriziano in Turin. He taught philosophy and theology at the Testona Friary (Turin). He was ordained a Bishop in 1846 and in 1852 went to the missions in Ethiopia on his own after a long and painful journey with many detours. In 1879 he was expelled by the Emperor John IV by which time he had established many Christian communities in Ethiopia. In 1884 he was created a cardinal by Pope Leo XIII who asked him to write a record of his missionary activity. His missionary memoirs were published in twelve volumes beginning in 1884. The work was entitled *I miei 35 anni di missione nell'alta Etiopia* [My Thirty-Five Years of Missionary Work in Upper Ethiopia]. This is one of the masterpieces of international missionary literature. Allamano founded our congregation with the intention of continuing Massaia's work.

I came here to preach and not to do manual labor is making a big mistake. A missionary sister wrote from Africa: “What is really necessary in the missions along with obedience and mutual charity is a love of hard work.” The same holds true for missionary priests.

**56. Helping each other.** It is truly beautiful to see members of a community compete with each other to see who can be the most helpful. Isn't this what happens in families? It is indeed beautiful when you all work together for the common good. The individual who cleans the house is acting for the love of God just as much as those who study or work. In our Congregation there are so many jobs to be done; one individual is suited for one job and another individual for some other task – working together we will get everything done. What is important is to do all for the love of God, to become saints and to save souls.

**57. Providing support.** We go to the missions to preach the Gospel but we still have to live and therefore we must be able to support ourselves. Someone who works is helping the community save money. Since we are its living members it is our duty to try and earn something for the Congregation. This is not a school where we pay tuition but rather a family where we all contribute. If we can help we should think ourselves fortunate and glad to contribute. We work not just to support ourselves but to help others as well. St. Paul urged Christians to work “let him be industrious, making an honest living with his own hands, so that he may be able to give to those in need” (Ephesians 4,28).

I think that proper preparation for the missions involves learning a useful trade and also being something of a jack of all trades. Remember I don't want the talents we have here to go unexploited. Everything useful that you know should be taken into account. No talent should be neglected. Do not be afraid of getting your hands dirty; be eager to engage in hard work – even humble household chores. Whoever has a problem with work or does it only unwillingly is not cut out to be a missionary. Learn how to do everything – everything is important. Be observant and willing to try any task; learn to love work.

You must work diligently and well. Keep your mind on what you are doing and do not waste time. Try hard to learn. Work enthusiastically. Do not avoid work or seek out comfort. The more there is to be done the more you must do. Here we are working for the love of God. Our efforts are not really excessive and they are done for the sake of the Lord and our own sanctification. Let us do the will of God in all things. If you had been “soft” you would not have come to our Congregation.

## **4 The mysteries of salvation**

### **The Foundation of our faith: the Holy Trinity**

**58.** The mystery of the Holy Trinity is the foundation of our whole faith. It is an unfathomable mystery that we must believe and adore ...we are humbled before such great majesty, we are happy before the infinite greatness of God ... it something we must make known. The Mass is the greatest and only really worthy praise we can offer the Holy Trinity. We honor the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit with the sign of the cross, the “Gloria Patri” and the Creed; every liturgical hymn concludes with praise and glory to the Holy Trinity. We pray the “Gloria Patri” so many times during the day – we do it with fervor and with the intention of offering God the praise He deserves and does not always receive. The “Gloria Patri” is a perfect act of love for God; with this prayer we praise Him and express the desire that he be praised by everyone. Glory be to God for all eternity!

The sign of the cross is the sign of a Christian: it is a prayer, praise of the Holy Trinity and a profession of faith. Early Christians made this sign constantly – almost before every daily act. Tertullian writes: “Before every action, before we enter or leave the house, every time we get dressed, when we wash, when we light the lamps, when we chat – we always make the sign of the cross.” If we do nothing else but resolve to make the sign of the cross well we will have already honored the Holy Trinity.

It is also homage to the Holy Trinity if we dedicate each of our actions to its glory. Everything belongs to God; everything comes from God; everything is in God. Everything that exists belongs to Him because He has created it and everything we have we received from God. Everything must therefore return to God, to His honor and to His glory – in the words of St. Ignatius: Ad majorem Dei gloriam – to the greater glory of God. Just as blood leaves the heart and runs through the arteries to the extremities of our body and then returns to the heart to be purified so too our actions and our life will have value and life to the extent that they come from God, from His holy will and with a purity of intention are undertaken for His glory alone. Everything for the honor and glory of the Holy Trinity.

One could say the Church celebrates the Holy Trinity all year long. Every Sunday, every day and every hour is a feast of the Holy Trinity. We are always honoring the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

All Christians, but especially missionaries, must honor the Holy Trinity. How can we credibly proclaim the Holy Trinity to non-Christians? First of all – with our own faith by doing everything for the honor and glory of the Holy Trinity. This will provide you with the special grace needed to present this mystery. It is truly wondrous that so many non-Christians accept and believe in a God who is both one and triune! “to the King of eternity, incorruptible and immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever (to the ages of ages). Amen” (I Timothy 1,17).

### **The Liturgical Year**

**59.** “God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten son” (John 3,16). The Son became flesh out of love for us: “For us men and for our salvation” as we say in the Creed. God who loved us from all eternity gave us what was most dear and precious: His only-begotten Son. The fact that He was “only-begotten” reveals the extent to which He loved us. The Son came because He loves us. What do you expect? Love begets love. This is all a mystery of love.

As children of God and members of the Church we have the duty not just to appreciate the Church’s understanding of the year’s feasts – we must take an active part in them. During Advent we contemplate the arrival of the Messiah, the expectation of the people, the prophets, etc. On a given Sunday we listen to the readings, pray the Liturgy of the Hours and share the sentiments the Church



reveals to the faithful on this particular Sunday. Similarly we must be devoted to the Saints, etc. We live the spirit of the Church – the Spirit of Our Lord. The Church offers us spiritual sustenance every day.

## **Advent**

**60.** The Liturgical Year begins with Advent. It is a time of expectation. It is one might say a lengthy preparation for Christmas. The Church has set out four weeks to prepare us for the Birth of the Son of God. This period of Advent recalls the three Comings of our Lord Jesus Christ: His coming into the world at His incarnation; His eschatological coming at the Last Judgment; and His spiritual coming into the heart of each person. It is so very important for us to prepare for Jesus' coming into our hearts. We enter into this spirit and make our own the cries of the Prophets found in the Sacred Liturgy: we repeat them all day, every day: "Oh, that You would rend the heavens and that You would come down" (Isaiah 63,19).

The Liturgy expresses many other sentiments during this season: "Use your power, Lord, and come; defend us from the dangers which overwhelm us because of our sins, save us." But are our hearts ready to receive the Lord? Then again, "Bestir our hearts, O Lord, and prepare a way for your only-begotten Son so that through your grace we may serve you with pure hearts." "O Lord, incline Your ear and listen to our prayers. Through the grace of Your coming dispel the darkness in our hearts so that we can understand the wonders you work." We must strive to make this spirit of the Church our own.

Advent is a time of renewal: we lower the hills and flatten the valleys; we avoid sin and practice virtue. Let us prepare ourselves, let us stimulate our hearts to love more so that the Lord can fill them with grace. Jesus will only come if He is desired. He wants to be desired. Jesus will come into our hearts with all His grace to the extent that we are prepared and desire Him. How kind is the Lord! He listens to our pleas and comes to us.

The Church prepares for Christmas with a novena that is dear to our hearts – a novena that is all love: "Come let us adore the Lord our coming King." "The Lord is close, come let us adore Him." Pray this novena – experience its faith: "The just man lives by faith" (Romans 1,17). Above all bow your heads before this mystery. To acknowledge the Infant is in no way demeaning. Foster the desire for His birth in you and in your community. We have loved this feast since childhood and how enthusiastically we prayed the Christmas novena! Let us think back to how we felt then. It comforts my heart to think back to those times.

## **Christmas**

**61.** Our Lord humbled Himself and became an infant. The crib reveals the Lord's humility and simplicity. If He has made Himself so small should we not do the same? St. Bernard says that Jesus made Himself small to be more lovable. St. Francis of Assisi remarked, "Let us love the Baby of Bethlehem! Let us love the Baby of Bethlehem!" He would repeat these words to everyone he met. Who doesn't love babies? You must celebrate this feast not just with your head but with your whole heart. Anyone who does not feel this love must ask Jesus to provide it; ask through the intercession of Our Lady – she burned with love as she looked on her child.

The mystery of Bethlehem is so very important! Contemplating the Passion is certainly important but it is equally important to contemplate Christmas. The Holy Infant gives us an important lesson by overcoming three things humans hunger for: pleasure, riches and honors. He teaches us how to overcome these hungers as well. He gives us an example – through suffering, poverty and humility. By being born in poverty He detached us from the allures of this world and canonized poverty.

Christmas is not just a holiday for children – it is a holiday for us as well because we must become as children to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. We must practice those virtues that befit the Holy

Child: simplicity and humility. The virtue of simplicity is so very important for a missionary – it is necessary if we are to be happily in distant places! And humility? Our Lord became a small child and then went even further and annihilated Himself through death on the cross. When you go to Church and look on Jesus in the tabernacle and the Infant in the Crib – say to Him, “I want all your virtues.”

We must love the Holy Child for Himself. He came down from heaven and assumed flesh for our sake, for each of us and for our salvation. We must think intensely about this “excessive” love of Jesus; we must return this love to the same degree. Let us ask God ceaselessly for this kind of love. Let us pray with St. Augustine, “Lord make me love you.”

## **The Name of Jesus**

**62.** The Father gave His Son the name Jesus which means Savior because He would save the world. A name is something like a life plan for the individual who bears it. St. Paul states that the Father gave the Son a name which is above every other name and at this name every knee should bend in heaven, on earth and below the earth. He adds that every tongue will proclaim that Jesus Christ is the Lord to the Glory of God the Father (Cf. Philippians 2,9-11). We read in the Acts of the Apostles: “And there is salvation in and through no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by and in which we must be saved” (Acts 4,12). How sweet is this name! It is honey on the lips, light to the mind and love in the heart. St. Paul repeats it over and over again in his letters.

Jesus tells us: “Whatever you ask the Father in my name will be given to you” (John 15,16). This is why the Church concludes all its prayers with the expression, “Through Christ Our Lord.” If this name is dear to every Christian how much more so is it dear to you who will proclaim it to all peoples and – following St. Paul’s example - will suffer for it. “For I will make clear to him how much he will be afflicted and will endure and suffer for My name’s sake” (Acts 9,16). Put up with anything to make the name of Jesus known and loved. We must pray that our last words in this life will be this name and that of Mary. Be very devoted to this name. It is our comfort and our consolation!

## **Year’s End**

**63.** Like every business at the end of the year we draw up a balance sheet and a budget for the coming year. Today we will handle the former and tomorrow the latter. Our balance sheet will have both credits and debits.

On the credit side are the natural and supernatural graces we have received. In the natural order there is the grace of continued life – continued creation – and good health. If perhaps we have suffered physical discomfort this too is a grace in God’s eyes. These are graces we have been given. In the supernatural order there is our vocation and perseverance. This is something enormous that we will never really be able to grasp. Some of us will rejoice at our religious profession and others our ordination; all of us will recall sermons, readings, meditations, etc. Add to these the sacraments: the many Communions and for those of us who are priests, the many Masses! And beyond this there is the prayer, the inspiration ... How many, many graces! For all of this we must thank the Lord.

On the credit side we can add good will in responding to our vocation, efforts to correct our defects, internal and external mortifications. Let us thank the Lord if we have accomplished something for without Him we could have done nothing – not little, not much but nothing.

Passive attitudes and feelings will not carry anything from God who could challenge the congregation as well as each one of us, saying: “Is there any other work I should have done in the vineyard but did not do?” (Cf. Isaiah 5,4). For how much of our negativity are we responsible? May none of us have to say “I was better in the past.” I don’t think any of us will be forced to say that

but surely each of us will have a “deficit.” Let us not lose courage if we have not accomplished very much; let us pray that Our Lady will help us do more. She makes up for our shortcomings if we show good will. The Lord does likewise – He is a kindly Father, ready to forgive everything as long as we strive to improve. Perfection can only be achieved through determination; we must renew our resolve every morning at Communion and often during the day; we must renew our resolve during our monthly retreats and on feast days.

## **New Year**

**64.** Yesterday we sang the Te Deum to thank God for all the graces we have received and today we will sing the Veni Creator to mark the New Year. We will begin each day and minute of this New Year with enthusiasm and courage. This is something you must start doing here and now and continue doing once you are in the missions. This is the spirit with which to launch the New Year. Don't worry about the past you can only control the present. All of you are full of good will. We hope we can thank the Lord at the end of this year as we thanked Him yesterday for the previous year. Life and death are a mystery. Time gone by never returns. If we are not ready to accept grace as it appears we can never go backwards to retrieve it. Like time past graces are gone forever.

We must behave as if this were the last year of our lives. If we really believed this we would forge ahead with so much good will. When I go into the choir at the cathedral – I think of death. I think of my own death; they will bury me in the cathedral and the canons will walk along Via Santa Chiara and Via Basilica on their way to the cathedral. Do you think it is morbid to think of these things? On the contrary it does me good. One day I will move along these streets – not on my own two legs but carried by others. When that day arrives I will wish I had spent my brief time here well! I think of the good and bad things that can be said about me. If they know of my shortcomings they will say, “ Oh that priest, he was a bad one, etc.” Then I will reach the cathedral where there is a statue of Our Lady. It is the statue I love most next to our own Consolata. I will bow to Our Lady and they will lay my body before her. She will smile at me. Then they will carry me to the altar of the Blessed Sacrament. I hope that when Our Lord sees me He will be pleased and will say: “Well done. You have always come and prayed faithfully. Now I will take care of your soul.” I assure you this does me good – these are things that will one day happen.

Look at the year that stretches out before you and prepare your “budget.” We make agendas for the day and should do so for the whole year. Remember the beautiful prayer of St. Elizabeth, the Queen of France, “What will happen to me this year? I don't know but I know nothing will happen that has not been foreseen, devised and ordained from all eternity.” Let us say the same thing; let us unite our will to the will of God: I accept everything, I will everything without reservations. This act is of great value: to unite ourselves to the will of God – not just in general but in all the details. Not one event, nor one word, not one activity that is not for You, My God!

It is supremely important to have a clear purpose. We must pass this year in the best way possible; if we show weakness let us recover immediately. There should not be even a single useless day. Let the New Year be one of many blessings for our Congregations, for the missions and for our missionaries.

## **Epiphany**

**65.** “There it was, the true light that enlightens every man” (John 1,9). Epiphany is a Greek word that means “manifestation” or “appearance.” The Infant Jesus revealed Himself to the Jews through the angels who appeared to the shepherds; He made Himself known to the gentiles through the star that led the Magi. Let us thank the Lord: through His manifestation to the Magi we have been called to enjoy the fruits of redemption and the gift of faith. Let us thank Him for non-Christians as well because they too have been called to know and love Jesus. Let us thank Him especially for our missionary vocation; through this vocation we share in Jesus' universal mission and He continues to

reveal Himself to humankind. Finally let us thank Him for the grace He has given to our Congregations and for all the good being accomplished in the missions.

Let us imitate the Magi with a prompt, generous and enduring response to His call. How many beautiful meditations on the Magi exist! What should we learn from them? I think the most important thing – and something we can reflect on all year – is faithfulness to their calling. Many saw the star that appeared in the east but only they recognized its significance: the Messiah was being born. They journeyed to Bethlehem: “We saw ... and we came” (Cf. Matthew 2,2). Many of you heard the voice of God calling you to the apostolate but once your initial fervor dissipated everything disappeared. It is not enough to be quick off the mark: you must respond to this initial grace. St. Augustine urges us to look out for the “time of the start” and not let the Lord and His grace pass us by.

The Magi were not just quick to respond – they responded with generosity and perseverance. They set off for their goal with no thought of how long or difficult the journey would be nor did they relent even when the star temporarily disappeared. They overcame these problems because they were generous and believed in God’s promises. Let us apply ourselves with the same fervor. Do we respond to each day’s grace with alacrity? Do we overcome the setbacks we encounter? Do we accept the hardships of mission with generosity? Is our faith strong? The Lord does not send us a single star but many: they represent the grace we need to persevere and become holy missionaries. Therefore we must be generous and constant in responding to the grace of our vocation.

Once they found the Child the Magi offered Him gold, frankincense and myrrh – charity, prayer and mortification. So every day, nay every hour, you must grow in the love of God and your neighbor; pray fervently that Jesus will fill you with the spirit of an apostle. Clothe yourself in mortification – this will be your companion your whole life long. The Epiphany is our feast. We must be missionaries in our head, our lips and our heart i.e. in our thoughts, our words and our works. The star will lead us to become holy Consolata Missionaries. We need only follow it.

### **Presentation of Jesus in the Temple**

**66.** Only forty days after His birth Jesus is offered to His Father in the temple. This reflects the offering He Himself will make many years later on Calvary in expiation for the sins of mankind. The Prophet tells us: “Sacrifice and offering You do not desire, nor have You delight in them; You have given me the capacity to hear and obey; burnt offerings and sin offerings You do not require. Then said I, behold, I come” (Psalm 40,7-8). Sacrifice was the reason Jesus was brought to the temple; Mary joined Him in this. Simeon called Jesus “a light to enlighten the gentiles” (Luke 2,32) and told His mother, “a sword will pierce your soul” (Luke 2,35). Generously she accepted this and was ready to carry out God’s will.

### **Lent**

**67.** “We beg of you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says, In the time of favor I have heard and heeded your call, and I have helped you on the day of deliverance. Now is truly the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (II Corinthians 6,1-2). Paul speaks of the “acceptable” time, the time of “salvation” – i.e. a time to be accepted with gratitude and love – the time of the Gospel. The Church applies Paul’s words to Lent and repeats them often. Lent is indeed the acceptable time. More than at any other time the Lord accepts what we do and hears our pleas. We must therefore grasp the moment and not let it pass us by. We must especially value this time. Never say – I can’t fast or pray any more. It is not so much the quantity of our prayer that counts as it is the intensity. We must be closer to God and not let hours go by without thinking of Jesus. This is the whole idea! We can apply these same words to you and to the time you spend preparing for mission. We must take advantage of this Lenten season – it is the time of opportunity. We must revive our spirits and move forward decisively and not be among the sluggards...

Lent is a special time of penance and prayer. We are not yet saints who can live on bread and water alone. All the same we must have a penitential spirit – we must accept life's hardships. The Lord wants small, minute but continual sacrifices. There are so many ways to practice penance or to fast. Some fast in one way and some in another. Besides depriving ourselves of food there is deprivation of the eyes, the imagination and the spirit.

**68.** During Lent the Church makes frequent use of Psalm 50 – the Miserere – in the Liturgy of the Hours. This is especially appropriate since it is a penitential psalm composed by David after he had sinned. The psalm teaches us about fear, hope and good intentions. Let us examine it and apply it to ourselves.

The Miserere can be divided into two parts. First David lists five reasons why the Lord should be merciful to him. The first is God's great mercy and His infinite compassion for our misery: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love" (verse 1). O Lord according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Act not in accordance with your justice but rather with your kindness: "Cleanse me from all my faults" (verse 4).

The second reason is David's recognition of his own lowliness and sincere hatred of his sin: "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me" (verse 5). Therefore sin is no longer within but before me and this keeps me humble. The third reason is that the offense was only against God and only from God can he receive pardon: "Against You, against You alone have I sinned" (verse 6). The fourth reason is that he deserves compassion since we are all weak and inclined to do evil. I do not want to excuse my sin – no it torments me – but I have been prone to evil since my birth: "Behold I was born in sin and in sin did my mother conceive me" (verse 7). The fifth reason invokes the grace and favor already granted. You, O Lord, had done so much for me before I ever sinned. Now cleanse me so that I can regain Your friendship: "You desire sincerity of heart and teach me wisdom in my inward being" (verse 8).

After this list of motives David expresses his confidence that he will be saved (second part of the psalm): "Grant me the joy of being saved" (verse 14). And he promises to teach others the ways of the Lord: "Then I will teach transgressors Your ways and sinners will return to You" (verse 15).

This is how we should study and apply this psalm to our own circumstances. In this psalm each of us will find and profit from God's inspiration. To make a sincere act of penance we need only pray the Miserere slowly and thoughtfully. Learn this and it will help you in the missions. Reciting the Miserere well is a consolation.

### **Passion and death**

**69.** All the saints were very devoted to the Passion of Jesus. Missionaries more than others should meditate on the Passion of Jesus. It should be one of our principal devotions. The Blessed Sacrament is a memorial and a renewal of the Passion.

If hearts are not made of stone contemplation on the Lord's passion will move us. Jesus suffered for each one of us as if we were the only ones: "He has loved me and given Himself for me" (Galatians 2,20). Whoever reflects on the fact that Jesus was wounded for our transgressions (Isaiah 53,5), must repent and do penance for his sins. Let us join our pain and suffering to the sufferings of Jesus as St. Paul put it: "I bear the wounds of Jesus in my body" (Galatians 6,17) and "I make up in my flesh what is lacking from the sufferings of Christ" (Colossians 1,4). We must concentrate our affections on the Our Lord's sufferings. This is what St. Paul did: "But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Galatians 6,14). We must make the Passion of the Lord our own; we must strive to keep it firmly in our mind, our heart, our body and our spirit.

Let us consider the sufferings of Jesus in depth. This will awaken our own desire to suffer for Him;

we will make sacrifices and overcome the pains of our heart and spirit and to the extent possible – the pains of our body. Until we are thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Christ’s passion we will never possess a spirit of generosity and sacrifice. Clothe yourself with love and gird yourself with the spirit of the Passion. Your greatest source of strength in the missions will be the thought of Jesus’ Passion. What can a missionary accomplish if he does not love Jesus Crucified? Meditation on the passion will lead you to understand Jesus’ words, “I thirst” (John 19,28). This will enflame you with missionary zeal.

**70.** We are devoted to the crucifix. It should be in our rooms and on our person; we should turn to it frequently with acts of faith and love. You do not always have the Blessed Sacrament with you – but the crucifix, yes. What is the crucifix for a missionary? It is a “book”, a “friend” and a “weapon.” A book to read and meditate; a friend that comforts and assists; a powerful weapon against the devil. It is not enough to carry the crucifix, you must imitate it. Whether you like it or not your life will be filled with suffering – no one can escape this. What is important is to bear suffering patiently and learn to love and even seek it out. Jesus did not leave His cross midway along the road to Calvary but he got up and carried on to the end. Let us ask Him for the supernatural light and love to follow behind Him carrying our cross lovingly and not dragging it reluctantly.

Our cross is not as heavy as His – and if we carry it in a union of love with Him it becomes sweet. It’s easy enough to say we love the cross but when it comes to actually carrying it or putting up with some little contretemps we pull back. The Lord has told us clearly: “If anyone would come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me” (Matthew 16,24). And St. Paul exclaims: “I have been crucified with Christ!” (Galatians 2,19). This is what it means to love the cross!

It is through the cross that we become saints and not through words or simple prayers. Words and prayers certainly help but what is most important is to bear our cross. The royal road to paradise is always the way of the cross. The only way to reach glory is to imitate the suffering Jesus. But Jesus will not be outdone in generosity – He gives us so much peace and so much joy. To suffer well is a gift from God and blessed is the one who receives it.

We must never lose this spirit – all our life long we must be ready to sacrifice ourselves. The Passion of the Lord will support us in the strains and sufferings of the apostolate and even in death itself. On the cross the Lord washed us in His blood. Let us kneel before Jesus Crucified and pray that we be cleansed. At His feet we will learn generosity in sacrifice. Anyone who does not take part in the Church’s commemoration of the Passion of Jesus has no heart – or no brain.

### **Easter – the Resurrection**

**71.** Easter is a holiday we have enjoyed since childhood; it is close to our heart. “Christ risen from the dead dies no more; death has no further power over Him” (Romans 6,9). We must rise with fervor – not just from sin but from all our weaknesses. We must keep alive the fervor we feel at this feast day. We will no longer die! Let us say to ourselves: “We have risen, we no longer wish to die, we want to be genuine missionaries!” Never be afraid of being too zealous!

**72.** After His resurrection Jesus appeared to His disciples and gave them the greeting of “peace.” What a wonderful thing peace is! St. Augustine defines it as “tranquility of order.” When everything within and around us is in order then there is peace. We are at peace with God if we carry out His will. We will be at peace with ourselves if we avoid distraction, control our passions and free ourselves from vain desires. We will be at peace with our neighbors if we accept their limitations and treat them with respect. Peace can co-exist with sacrifice and trial but not with sin. If you have this peace, a gift of God, you will go forward in serenity and will find greater success in all you do. Ask Our Lord to give you this peace – He is after all the Prince of Peace. He will certainly grant it

to you if you are willing to do what is necessary to preserve it.

**73.** Throughout Eastertide one feels the urge to cry out Alleluia! The liturgy repeats it over and over along with “This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad” (Psalm 117,24). Equally sweet and pleasing is the prayer we direct to Our Lady at Easter time: “Queen of Heaven, rejoice. Alleluia!” The Church is suffused with joy during this period. Anyone not inclined to take part in this feast and enjoy it in his heart has neither heart nor intelligence.

Joyfulness is a necessary virtue. We are never too joyful. That might be the case if our joy was worldly or vulgar; but true joy of heart and spirit – no there is never too much. We are joyful always - every day and all year long. The Lord loves and favors joyful people. The psalm tells us: “Serve the Lord with joy” (Psalm 99,2). St. Paul: “Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice!” (Philippians 4,4). The Lord wants us to be joyful at all times ... even when we are sleeping. We must be like infants: when they sleep they are at peace and smile. We live better and more perfectly if we are at peace. The psalm says: “I run along the path of your commandments because you have opened my heart” (Psalm 118,4). You open my heart to confidence, trust and joy. I do not just walk along the path of Your commandments, I run. When I am melancholy I walk slowly with feet of lead.

We are joyful with our neighbors, they do not have to put up with our moods but will say “These missionaries have left their home, their families, everything and still they are always joyful.” To do good we must be joyful: this will edify our neighbors and draw them to virtue. If we are saints but totally self-absorbed, thinking only of ourselves, others will be afraid to approach us.

Naturally our joy should not be inappropriate. Joy does not mean dissipation, shouting or turning the house upside down. Speak, smile – but do everything with moderation because joy is a virtue; be careful lest it degenerate into something else.

**74.** Joyfulness is the opposite of sadness. We must be strong lest sadness become despair. When we are constantly sad we accomplish nothing worthwhile. Some people are congenitally sad – it is their temperament. Others are depressed without knowing why. And there are still others who suffer stress – everything bothers them they are never happy. They are constantly seeking new and novel things and as a result they become bored and depressed. We must be even-tempered and not reeds shaken in the wind, alternately cheerful and depressed. If we act like this in the missions what will happen? Depression clouds the mind, paralyzes the will and destroys peace.

We can overcome sadness with prayer: we must desire holiness; we must be happy with our state in life; we must accept both the good and the bad from God’s hand; we must be patient and bear with adversity. We must be determined to live our lives with holiness, joy and fervor. A community in which all members were so determined would be an earthly paradise. There will always be weakness but our purpose here is to accept and support each other: to help each other become saints. We must not give way to depression: rather place everything in God’s hands. In this way we will edify each other and others as well. I do not want this to be a house of sadness but rather a house of joy. If you cannot overcome sadness or control your moods in the missions you will do only harm.

I would like to see you following God’s will, seeking and finding your security in His hands. How pleasing it is when we forge ahead; forward, ever forward! I want you to be cheerful. You must have health of mind and body. I would like to see your calm, flexibility and serenity ever increasing. This is the spirit I want for you: always joyful, always happy faces.

## **Ascension**

**75.** The Ascension is a feast that goes straight to the heart and gives the soul a foretaste of heaven. The Lord brought the Apostles to the mountaintop so they could share in His glorious ascension into heaven. Along the way He gave them several final teachings and then the cloud took Him from their view. They remained ecstatic until an angel brought them back to reality: “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1,9-11). Possibly the apostles were thinking – we would like to go with Him. No. First you must go and work for many years doing what He told you to do. Then they left the mountain and returned to Jerusalem.

The Ascension is the feast of heaven. Our heart is with Jesus and we ascend with Him. He is glorified and sits at the right hand of the Father interceding on our behalf (cf. Hebrew 7,25). He prepares a place for us as He promised the Apostles (cf. John 14,2-3). Yes, Jesus is holding a place for me in heaven – He is doing this for each of us if we only desire it. This realization must give us courage and move us to be worthy missionaries; it must strengthen our will to work and expect no reward in this life; we will have our reward in heaven. Courage and perseverance! Heaven is costly and we will never be able to pay enough.

Look especially at the last words Jesus addressed to His disciples before going up into heaven: “Go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel to the whole of creation” (Mark 16,15). Jesus gives this same command to missionaries. What a comfort this is! At that very moment the Lord was thinking of each of us. We see how the Church was close to His heart. His parting words could have been: be more patient, more kind, more charitable, more humble, etc... but no He said: Go into all the world.

Jesus promised supernatural and extraordinary assistance: “And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues” (Mark 16,17). At that very moment He was thinking of us, missionaries, we who continue the mission of the Apostles. What a comfort these promises are – they were proved true in the early centuries of the Church. Before ascending into heaven Jesus also said: “But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24, 49). It is almost as if He said – don’t go off to evangelize half-cocked; first prepare yourselves. Before launching our mission we must prepare ourselves through the grace that comes from the Holy Spirit.

## **Pentecost**

**76.** Jesus said: “Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you” (John 16,7). The Holy Spirit does not just send us His gifts and fruits, He Himself comes down in Person. The Lord did not say, “Receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit;” He said: “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20,22).

It is the Holy Spirit who applies the merits of the Redemption Jesus has won; it is the Holy Spirit who saves and sanctifies us; it is the Holy Spirit who gives us His gifts. It is the Holy Spirit who makes people saints.

The Apostles withdrew to the cenacle and remained there in prayer with Mary (Cf. Acts 1,14). She helped the Apostles and procured for them the abundance of the Holy Spirit and she will do the same thing for us. The Holy Spirit does not appear in the midst of noise and dissipation; He comes where there is recollection. Whatever you do, do it in order to obtain the fullness of the Holy Spirit. In the cenacle they were all together, all of one mind. This is important: where there is no love the Holy Spirit will not come.

Under the influence of the Holy Spirit the Church was born on Pentecost. It is the Spirit that directs the Church and so it will be until the end of time. The Pope and the bishops lead the Church under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost is a “Second Easter.” St. John Chrysostom calls it the fulfillment of all the other feasts. St. Maximus writes that it does not just commemorate the event, it repeats it. The Holy Spirit comes down again in a new way. Both in the past and today the Holy Spirit descends upon the Church and the faithful who are prepared and with the same result: the



spreading of the faith. He is responsible for all the good we accomplish in the missions.

**77.** Works of love and grace are attributed to the Holy Spirit. He is entirely love and because of the love He has for us He burns with the desire to communicate Himself to us. Love demands love. Our duties to the Holy Spirit are: to know Him, to love Him and to follow Him. Let us ask Him to enflame our hearts so that we may become a new creation. All grace comes from the Holy Spirit but especially love. Loving the Son in no way offends the Father; so too loving the Spirit in no way offends the Son. This is the same love that inspired the Apostles to proclaim the Gospel with so much fervor. We too need this enthusiasm and it is the Holy Spirit who will give it to us.

It is difficult to live under His influence and not become a saint. Let us listen gladly to His voice in our heart. It is the voice of grace that we must put into practice. Let us follow the Holy Spirit with generosity and perseverance. If we receive the Holy Spirit worthily we will all become genuine and holy apostles. Let us place ourselves in His hands; let Him do what He wills we will follow meekly. He will make us saints. When we receive the Holy Spirit with His gifts and fruits we are transformed.

St. Paul says: “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4,30). Three things can block His coming into our hearts: sin, a worldly spirit and too earthly a concept of life.<sup>1</sup> First of all, sin. The Holy Spirit cannot come and dwell where sin lives and reigns. Sin extinguishes God’s grace and therefore the presence of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul tells us “Do not quench the Spirit” (I Thessalonians 5,19).

A worldly spirit and too earthly a view of life can block the Holy Spirit. He is the “spirit of truth that the world cannot receive because it neither sees nor knows Him” (John 14,17). St. Paul explains: “those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit” (Romans 8,5). Chrysostom goes on to say that the light of the Holy Spirit can be extinguished by wind or a lack of oil, i.e. by the spirit of the world or a lack of good works.

**78.** I remember bringing the Blessed Sacrament to a priest who was gravely ill when I was a seminarian. As he waited to receive the Eucharist the holy priest kept reciting the sequence “Veni Sancte Spiritus” [Come Holy Spirit]. I sometimes recite this sequence myself before celebrating Mass – it is something you too could do. The words “Come Father of the poor” should inspire us with confidence, we are so weak and full of defects. The Holy Spirit is the protector of the destitute. They say that bees flee thunder – the Holy Spirit too seeks quiet, recollection. There are so many phrases in the Veni Sancte Spiritus that we could repeat throughout the day. We should say to the Lord, “Send Your Spirit to create a new heart within me.”

We should also pray the hymn Veni Creator Spiritus [Come Creator Spirit]. We would do well to reflect on the words of this hymn. It begins “Come Creator Spirit, visit our mind and fill the heart Your goodness has created.” First of all, we invite the Holy Spirit to come and fill us with His grace. Then we list His titles: “You are the Paraclete, the Gift of the Most High, a source of living water, fire and charity.” What beautiful titles - all taken from Scripture. Then the hymn speaks about the gifts: “You have given us seven gifts; You are the finger of the Father’s right hand, You were promised to the Apostles.” And then we make our prayer: “Enlighten our mind and intellect; help us with Your strength.” We ask Him for peace, we ask for help to avoid sin and the grace to know the Father and the Son.

We must foster His grace in us and our response to it. We must respond to His grace lest charity - the Holy Spirit - be extinguished. At times our grasp of the gifts seems tenuous because we are

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<sup>1</sup> To describe those who lived their lives ignoring the principles of the faith Allamano used the expression “too human a spirit.” In view of the sensitivity and mode of expression used by present-day anthropologists Allamano’s thought would be better expressed with “too earthly a concept of life.”

without enthusiasm and our lives are a mediocrity. We must revive God's grace in us. The Holy Spirit will do His part but He expects us to do all we can.

**79.** The Holy Spirit gives His gifts freely and we must do our part to make them flourish. Wisdom: to appreciate spiritual things, keep our eyes on heaven and not give too much importance to the things of this world; Understanding: knowing what is within, the light which dispels the darkness, allows us to penetrate the mysteries and gives us serenity in our belief; Counsel: so we know where we are going and can lead others to virtue and holiness; Fortitude: to overcome weakness in times of danger or adversity and to prepare us for sacrifice and even martyrdom; Knowledge: to turn our thoughts from things of this world to those of the next; Piety: to honor God as our Father and everyone else as our brother or sister; Fear of the Lord: to avoid offending Him because He is our Father.

According to St. Paul the fruits of the Holy Spirit are: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5,22-23). According to St. Ambrose these virtues are called fruits because they "restore love to the soul and contain sweetness and savor." Whoever enjoys these fruits lives in the Holy Spirit. To find delight in them we must be devoted to the Holy Spirit. They are balm to the heart, they make us ignore the miseries of life and even love sacrifice.

**80.** St. Paul further says that we are temples of the Holy Spirit: "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells within you?" (I Corinthians 3,16). If we are temples of God we are, as it were, churches. What do we do in church? We do many things: we are careful to tend to material and spiritual cleanliness; we are silent and do not let our mind wander; we pray; we offer sacrifice when we take part in the Eucharistic Sacrifice; we listen to the Word of God and the Spirit speaks to us; we celebrate feast days with joy; we adorn our heart with acts of virtue.

Receiving the Holy Spirit is like receiving the Eucharist in communion. What we receive is the Spirit in person. He is pleased to dwell in us. We must reflect on this great and comforting truth often. In mission you will need the Holy Spirit. He will assist you and if necessary will perform miracles for you. Devotion to the Holy Spirit must become part of the very fabric of your being. It must remain so throughout your life – every month, every day and every hour. He will assist you in times of sadness or disappointment in the missions. If you call upon the Holy Spirit He will certainly give you courage and enthusiasm. The Spirit comforts and heals every wound.

Let us agree upon this: we will never abandon the Holy Spirit – we will keep Him within ourselves always. St. Philip Neri wanted all his religious to be sons of the Holy Spirit and I want the same thing for you. Yes, all of you should be sons and daughters of the Holy Spirit!

## **Corpus Christi**

**81.** I would be remiss if I passed over the feast of Corpus Christi without speaking about this great mystery. Properly speaking the feast of the Blessed Sacrament is Holy Thursday in the context of the Lord's Passion. To give it greater solemnity the Church established this feast after Pentecost.

This should be a feast "of the heart" – a feast of thanksgiving. In our Congregation this feast will be a day to renew and strengthen our love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. We should pray "O Sacrum Convivium" with all our heart and mind: O Sacred Banquet in which Christ is received! Jesus is as really present in the Sacrament as He is in heaven.

"The memory of Your passion is renewed": "Do this in memory of me" Jesus told His Apostles (Luke 22,19). St Paul says the same thing: "Every time you eat this bread or drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes again" (I Corinthians 11,26).

“The mind is filled with grace”: this Sacrament provides not just a little grace but a fullness of grace. At communion we are permeated with grace – there is no part of us that is not filled with it. We receive the very author of grace.

“And we are given a pledge of future glory”: the Eucharist is a pledge. Jesus wanted to leave us a gift – He left us Himself. We have heaven here on earth. This Sacrament contains the treasures of wisdom and divine knowledge. By giving us Himself Jesus gives us everything. St. Augustine wrote: “He was almighty but could not give us more. He was all-wise but knew not what else to give us. He was rich but could not give us more.”

### **Sacred Heart of Jesus**

**82.** The feast of the Sacred Heart is a fulfillment, a continuation of the feast of Corpus Christi. The Church teaches us that this feast was established to commemorate Jesus’ love for us in His passion. The Eucharist is the eternal memorial of that love. This is why these two feasts – although distinct – are intimately linked.

We owe the Heart of Jesus the same honor we give the Blessed Sacrament. These two devotions are distinct but they explain and complete each other. Devotion to the Heart of Jesus helps us understand the immense love of the Lord who gave Himself to us in the Holy Eucharist; the Eucharist helps us understand and gives us the Heart of Jesus.

The Heart of Jesus that the Church venerates is the same heart that suffered so much during His life on earth and especially during His passion. This heart bore the burden of mankind’s sin in Gethsemane and was pierced on the cross. We offer honor, adoration and love to the heart pierced by a lance. I want you to understand what this devotion involves – its object is the living heart of the Lord. Why does the Church honor the heart? Why – because in popular understanding it is the seat of our feelings. Everything is prompted by the heart and the will. If the heart stops life ends. This is not a new devotion – it is as ancient as the Son of God’s arrival on earth.

Our Congregations are consecrated to the Heart of Jesus. This consecration is a renewal and reaffirmation of our baptismal consecration. It is a recognition of the Lord’s rights over us. It reflects the honor and justice which for thousands of reasons we owe our Creator, our Redeemer and our Greatest Good. We must persevere in this devotion; we expect so much from this devotion – new, holy missionaries with zeal for the missions.

### **Feast of All Saints**

**83.** Our eyes and hearts are fixed on heaven so that we can rejoice with the saints. The thought of heaven must be the dominant consideration on this day. I believe that there are very likely greater saints in heaven than those we honor on the altars. Formal canonization is not required; the Lord welcomes saints at their death. How many wonderful surprises there will be in heaven.

Everything the Church offers us is beautiful. We must live the spirit of the Church every day – it will be our spiritual nourishment, it will make us live the spirit of the Lord. Today the Church calls on us to rejoice: “Let us all rejoice in the Lord celebrating this feast of all the saints!” For our joy to bear the fruit of holiness we must know how to approach the saints and what obligations we have towards them. First of all we honor them because they are God’s friends, our older brothers and our benefactors. Each year our Congregation chooses a patron saint for special honor and imitation: this is a praiseworthy practice. The feast day of the saint whose name we bear should be special as well. We should honor the saint of the day, the patrons of our diocese, parish, congregation and the places where we travel.

We should also have recourse to the saints. They are our intercessors: they can and will help us obtain the grace we need. We should turn to them with trust and love. When we are in need of a

special virtue we should turn to the saint known for that virtue: St. Thomas, St. Alphonsus and St. Francis de Sales for knowledge; St. Aloysius, St. John Berchmans and St. Stanislaus Kostka for purity; St. Francis Xavier, St. Peter Claver, St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen, Blessed Pierre Chanel for apostolic zeal, etc. I would also recommend special devotion to the saints not often remembered. A father, a mother, an acquaintance ... these too can be saints. This is what we think – and there is some truth in it.

Finally we must imitate the saints. They are models worthy of imitation; their lives and virtues present remarkable variety. Here on earthy they encountered trial and temptation; they too had their defects but with God's grace they became saints. Let us join with St. Augustine and say to ourselves: "If these men and women, why not me?" If these men and women in the same state of life could become saints why cannot I? This is what we should learn from the feast of All Saints.

Let us turn our thoughts to the saints, to honor, imitate and have recourse to them. Let us recognize what they tell us from heaven. Although they are totally happy if there was something else they could still desire it would be more virtue, more zeal, etc. Some of the saints were such successful missionaries and religious. And we alas fall far short. We must forge ahead; we must live the life of heaven!

Let us ask the saints to speak to us: we will listen and do what they say. The Church has us venerate a multitude of saints; through their intercession a shower of blessings will descend upon us. The memory of the saints lasts for all eternity. Let us set our sites high. Lift up your hearts.

## **All Souls**

**84.** In the creed we proclaim the "communion of saints" and it is a dogma of faith. The Church militant, the Church suffering and the Church triumphant are three branches of the same plant, three provinces of the same kingdom, three classes of citizens in a single city, etc. Death does not destroy this union. St. Paul wrote that we made up a single body in Jesus Christ and each one of us is a member of that body (Cf. Romans 12,5).

You know that purgatory exists and the communion of saints exists there too. According to Sts. Thomas and Bonaventure to pray for the dead is an act of love of God and our neighbor. Works of charity, public and private prayer, sacrifices, almsgiving – these are all ways to benefit the dead. But the main way is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The dead always benefit from the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar.

We must pray intensely for the souls in purgatory – especially for missionaries. Our Constitutions prescribe prayers to be said when they die. We should also pray for our dead benefactors. This is a sacred duty of gratitude. What could we have accomplished without them? Among these benefactors we must remember Msgr. Demichelis who gave us our first motherhouse; his sister who gave us the house in Rivoli; and the Engineer Felizzati, a professor of mathematics at the university, who wanted to be a missionary. When he died at the age of 42 he named me his heir. I was against this but he insisted: "Let me die in peace." There is also Abbot Nicholis di Robilant and so many others... From heaven they see all in God; they know what we need and will inspire and help us.

Nor should we forget our deceased brothers and sisters. We pray for them each day – especially at Mass. It is a beautiful thing when we say in community, "Let us remember the anniversary of the death of our brother or sister ...". We must all pray for them. Everything we do in the community will benefit them. Our community consists living and dead members – this bond will never be broken, not even in heaven.

Recently I made a pilgrimage on foot to the cemetery all alone. I went first to the chapel but the Blessed Sacrament wasn't there; I then set out on my pilgrimage. I didn't stop to look at the impressive monuments, I began on the right at the tomb of Don Ignazio Viola who said Mass so beautifully. Then I went to the tomb where the body of St. Joseph Cafasso once rested – it is no

longer there. I seemed to read on the tombstone: "He is not here" (Cf. Matthew 28,6). Many priests from the Little House of Cottolengo are there including the theologian L. Guala – he delighted in working for the glory of God. I spoke to him and asked him to inspire me. Then I went to the grave of Canon G.M.Soldati, the rector of the seminary when I was a student there. I said a few words to him and we came to an understanding. Then I passed by the graves of Mrs. De Luca, the Visitation, Blessed Sacrament and St. Joseph Sisters and then stopped at Msgr. Demichelis' grave and said: "When I see you again in heaven will you be pleased with the use I have made of your property?" I stopped and spoke to him for a while. Then I went to the grave of Abbot N. di Robilant who was so calm and cheerful throughout his long illness. Finally after passing by the bishops I took the tram back home.

All Souls is not a sad day for me. It is a day of joy – I would hesitate to tell this to others but I'm sure you understand.

## 5 Theological Virtues

### Faith

**85. Doubly blessed.** St. Augustine describes holiness as a house: it rests on a good foundation, is constructed with the appropriate material and rises several stories. Thus it is with our own holiness: it rests on the foundation of faith, it is built with hope and crowned with charity. Faith is the foundation of holiness and of every virtue.

Jesus once said to His disciples: “Blessed are the eyes which have seen what you see. Indeed I say to you that many prophets and kings wanted to see the things you see but did not see them” (Luke 10,23). It was extraordinary good fortune to live at the same time as Our Lord, to know Him personally, to hear Him speak and to witness His miracles. The patriarchs, kings and prophets of the Old Testament never had this good fortune. They, like Abraham, longed to see the Messiah: “Abraham, your father, nourished the hope of seeing My day; he saw it and rejoiced” (John 8,56). He saw it, yes, but only in a vision; the same thing was true of David and Isaiah – they described the life of the Messiah but they did so before the event. The disciples on the other hand saw and heard Jesus in person – they were familiar with Him.

And are we not also blessed? After showing Thomas His wounds Jesus said: “Because you have seen me you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen me but still believe!” (John 20,29). We therefore are blessed if we have faith in Him. Not just blessed, but doubly blessed. First because we believe without seeing and then because we really see and hear Him. It is not necessary to see with our eyes or hear with our ears to be able to say that we see and hear Him. Some things we can learn from history; we know what Jesus said and did both during His earthly life and throughout centuries in the Church. He is with us forever until the end of time. With the eyes of faith we can see and hear Him in the Blessed Sacrament where He is just as alive as He is in heaven.

**86. Living by faith.** What does it mean to live by faith? It means to conform to and model ourselves on the dictates of faith. If this is the principle and rule of our life we will strive to do everything according to the dictates of this faith. We will judge everything in the light of the faith; faith will provide the criteria for our decisions. All Christians need faith if they are to be saved: “Without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11,6). Through no merit of our own we were given this faith at Baptism. It made us part of the supernatural order. The spirit of faith should accompany our every action from morning till evening, by day and by night; it should be the living and profound certainty that guides our daily life.

St. Paul recommends faith to Timothy: “You, man of God ... pursue faith” (I Timothy 6,11) – in other words preserve and perfect it. How can we do this? Since faith is a gift of God we must pray for it constantly. Before casting a demon out of a child the Lord asked the child’s father for a profession of faith. The father asked Jesus to increase his faith: “I believe, help my unbelief” (Mark 9,24). This is something we must say repeatedly: help us believe! Or “increase our faith” (Luke 17,5). St. Augustine urges us to pray the Creed often and well; it contains the truths of the faith like so many precious pearls. We must live by faith: “my righteous one shall live by faith” (Hebrews 10,38).

**87. In mission.** One does not need an abundance of words to reach God – but rather an abundant spirit of faith. If everyone needs this spirit of faith how much more necessary it is for missionaries. Without this spirit what can be accomplished in the missions? You must promote the faith in the midst of millions of non-Christians. “If one is not reborn of water and the spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven” (John 3,5). Surely you see the importance of faith both for yourselves and others. You are indeed fortunate to have so sublime a mission. We must have great faith and be

willing to profess it publicly – even if this means martyrdom.

If we have the spirit of faith we will never feel abandoned. Everyone else may abandon us but God never will. If we live by faith even the burden of being a missionary will disappear. Even though we can do nothing by ourselves with God's help we can do anything. They used to say that St. Joseph Cottolengo had more faith than all the other inhabitants of Turin together. We must have a very vital faith. Not a single hair of our head will be lost without God willing it (Cf. Luke 21,18). Let us ask for an increase of faith. A pinch of faith can master anything.

**88. Practical faith.** You will say that thank God you do have faith and you hold it dear. Well you may have an intellectual faith but does it carry over into practice? It is not enough to possess the faith. If our faith does not produce works it is dead: "Faith without works is dead" (James 2,20).

All our thoughts should conform to the faith. We must ask ourselves, is this specific thought pleasing to God? Yes – only God. Everything by, with and from God! Get rid of useless thoughts! They give rise to criticism of our colleagues, the decisions of our superiors, present or past events, the things of this world, etc. What good is all this in the light of eternity? One day St. Benedict Joseph Labbre, ragged and dirty, was passing by an upper-class gentleman and heard him say, "Poor unfortunate creature!" "No," Labbre responded, "I'm not unfortunate at all – I am in God's good graces." The "gentleman" was judging according to the world's criteria and the saint was speaking according to the spirit of faith. The same could be said about the false opinions others may have of us – what do they matter? "The one who must judge me is the Lord" (I Corinthians 4,4).

Are all our feelings guided by the spirit of faith? Do we have any feelings or attachments contrary to this spirit? Our attachments may be trivial but still they block our total attachment to God. A heart filled with God expresses itself in words: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12, 34).

In everything we do the spirit of faith must be our guide – especially in those of our activities directly connected to the service of God. During a pastoral visit to a parish Msgr. Gastaldi found dirty corporals and altar linen while the house linen was spotless. He addressed the pastor: "Do you believe in the real presence of the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament?" – "Your Excellency, you offend me," the pastor replied. "No," the Bishop said, "do you or do you not believe?" "Of course I believe." "So much the worse – if you believe you have no excuse." If I put the same question to each of you: "Do you believe in the real presence of the Lord in the consecrated Host?" You would surely reply "Yes." Then I could further say, "Why is your genuflection so sloppy? Why do you let yourself be distracted? Why do you find visits to the Blessed Sacrament boring? Why do you go all day long without thinking of the Lord?" No, it is not good enough to have an abstract, intellectual faith. Our faith must be practical, something that informs our every action.

**89. A simple and total faith.** St. Augustine says: "The ignorant will rise up and steal heaven away from us – and we with all our intellect will be left with the earth." Certainly we should not believe without authority and reason but when there is good reason to believe and the one who speaks is truthful then we must believe. Jesus said, "I bless you, Father, because you have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to the little ones." (Matthew 11,25). St. Thomas Aquinas tells us that faith comes not just from the intellect but from the will as well; it is not the intellect but the will that makes us believe. We need simplicity if we are to believe.

If a missionary does not possess the simple and total faith one finds in adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament what will he accomplish? When this humble, simple, total faith is absent there is nothing.

We can and we must study to understand things – but at the same time we must repeat over and over: I believe, Lord! "Like new born infants long for the pure spiritual milk that you may grow up

into salvation” (I Peter 2,2). Let us move forward with humility and simplicity in our faith. If we doubt everything we will soon begin to doubt our faith. This may only be a temptation but it is troubling. Here in this house we have simplicity. I want you to be simple – that does not mean you believe everything. Faith and credulity are not the same thing. The Lord told us “to be as cunning as serpents and as simple as doves” (Matthew 10,16).

**90. Guidance of the Church.** Love the truths of the faith and study their beauty and reasonableness; under the guidance of the Church they will prove a blessing for time and eternity. Study can provide us with theological knowledge but not with Catholic faith. Catholic faith involves believing something because the Church says it is so. Our Congregations and our members must be attached to the Roman Pontiff and the Church. “Where Peter is, there is the Church.” We profess total submission to the Church and to the Pope; not to this or some other specific but to the Pope as such. Even in those things where we are free to choose we choose to be with him. If there is someone here who does not agree with the Pope – even in things not involving faith or morals – he does not belong here. We want to be “the Pope’s men” in every sense of the word. We pray to the Holy Apostles, Peter and Paul, for the grace to be forever one with the Holy See – both as individuals and collectively. This grace will give our Congregation stability.

## Hope

**91. Open our hearts to hope.** According to St. Augustine we build the edifice of our holiness with hope. Note the important role he assigns to hope. Generally speaking this virtue does not enjoy the universal respect it deserves. We recognize the obligation to believe but we are afraid of being too hopeful, too optimistic. We accept discouragement as something beneficial that reflects fear of Lord.

This certainly was not the case with Cafasso – he was a man of hope. He possessed this virtue to an eminent degree. He had so much hope it was contagious. When someone remarked that the gate to heaven was narrow he replied, “Fine, we’ll go in one at a time.” He could communicate hope even to those condemned to death. He would give them messages to bring to Our Lady and after their deaths he would exclaim – one more saint! He even added “those rascals are stealing heaven away from us!” He could convert despair into the most beautiful trust. We must never despair of anyone. God’s mercy is infinite. When people ask what was Cafasso’s principal virtue it is hard to answer: they were all principal. Some think the zeal for souls was principal. Others would say his confidence in God – and he did indeed have enough confidence for himself and others as well. Hope or confidence in God was certainly one of his striking characteristics. I testified to this in the beatification process. Some have a lively faith but little hope – they have trouble opening their hearts.

Let us open our hearts to living hope. We should not just hope – we should “superhope” – hope against hope. When we have little hope we are doing the Lord an injustice “He desires all people to be saved” (I Timothy 2,4). Some people think of their salvation as winning the lottery. People say: “I’m not sure whether or not I will win the lottery.” Similarly some say: “I’m not sure whether or not I will be saved.” This is not the way things should be. We must count on salvation because the Lord knows our weaknesses – all we need is a little good will. We should never be afraid of having too much hope. At the moment of his death St. Hilarion said to himself – “You have served the Lord for seventy years and now are you afraid of dying?”

We should never say, “Who knows if I will be saved?” Rather “I want to be saved and will therefore correct my faults and not lose courage.” The fear of not being saved comes from laziness. We must get up and work – as the saints did. We must not lose courage because of our past sins. It is not a bad thing to think of these past sins – it keeps us humble – but we should not be obsessive as if the Lord had not forgiven them. The Lord will be pleased if we concentrate on His kindness and mercy.



Therefore hope and hope energetically. In You, O Lord, I have hoped and I shall not be confounded in eternity!

**92. Eyes fixed on heaven.** The idea of heaven must be always in our mind. This thought has made saints; it has filled the desert with hermits; it has filled religious houses with consecrated people and it has filled mission territories with zealous missionaries. This thought can work great things in us. First of all it detaches us from this world. Cafasso used to say “We must look on everything down here in the light of our reward up there; if something is ugly or painful it will not exist in heaven.” The thought of heaven will help us overcome obstacles, sufferings and the trials of this life. When boredom, fatigue or inertia force us to pass hours and days of darkness we can repeat the words of St. Francis: “The reward that awaits me is so great that every suffering becomes a delight!” If suffering is not yet a delight for us it is at least bearable. Suffering lasts but a little while – our reward lasts forever. St. Paul says, “For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” (II Corinthians 4,17).

The thought of heaven makes it easier to acquire virtue and to respond faithfully and generously to our calling – to be saints, great saints, the greatest saints possible. The thought of heaven is something truly great that prompts us to become saints. The years go by quickly and we will be fortunate if at the end of our lives we can say with St. Paul, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there remains only the crown of righteousness which the Lord will award me on that day” (II Timothy 2,7). Don Bosco had this slogan over the door: “Heaven is not made for the lazy.” Not only is heaven not for the lazy it is not for those who work only halfheartedly for the Lord.

When you think of those in heaven do not think of abstractions – think of this or that particular missionary who was faithful to his vocation. The Lord said: “I am going to prepare a place for you” (John 14,2). To reach this place we must work and work very hard. It would be far too easy to win heaven now – so quickly. No, we must work forty, fifty maybe even more years. But the thought of heaven should give us respite. Our reward is there and it is great. Let us think about this often.

**93. A storehouse of confidence.** Really outstanding, robust hope is called confidence. Confidence is, as it were, the essence of hope. It is necessary to make up the disparity between our own nothingness and the sublime religious, priestly and missionary vocation we have been given.

We must have an abundant supply of confidence if we are to inspire it in others. Without confidence we can accomplish nothing. If we are diffident we do God an injustice. Cafasso called a lack of confidence the sin of the stupid. It costs so little to trust in God! Why then should we not trust in Him?

Everyone needs confidence. It frees the wicked from their vices and puts them on the path of virtue and courage: “I will get up and go to my father” (Luke 15,18). It makes the lukewarm more enthusiastic and zealous: “The Lord is kind to those who seek Him” (Lamentations 3,25). But it is even more necessary for the zealous. They need it lest they become discouraged by what God asks of them, lest they become dispirited by their frequent falls, sins or defects. When we examine our lives we find ourselves committing the same faults over and over again – we could be tempted to say “This is altogether pointless, I will never get any better!” But I would ask why you find the same defects over and over? Because you are lukewarm! Do what you can and the Lord will assist you! We are really foolish when we lack confidence.

We must find the good in everything. St Paul assures us that “everything works for the good of those who love God” (Romans 8,28). Yes, everything – even sin – if there is good will. If we are humble we can turn everything – even sin – to good.

Confidence, Confidence. After confession we should think of virtue and not of sin any longer. Cheer

up, a little love of God will fix everything. Never lose heart, always begin anew: “Nunc coepi” – now I begin. I would say this is the motto of our Congregations. If we have this confidence we will avoid the stumbling block of anxiety and scruples. When we feel anxious or uncertain we must turn to the voice that provides tranquility. Cafasso used to say “we need not continually ask pardon for each little fault – this is what our relationship with God should be. The love of God washes away everything!” He would further say: “Lord You know that I do not wish to offend You and that I love You; therefore if I should forget something I do not even wish to ask Your pardon.”

You will need this confidence in the future when you are in the missions. You will become discouraged by your mistakes, the poor results of your apostolate, loneliness, etc. But cheer up, have courage. “Whoever places his trust in the Lord will be like Mount Zion: it does not move, it is stable forever” (Psalm 124,1). If you are not brimming over with confidence you will be sad on the missions. A missionary without confidence can accomplish nothing; he is a torment to himself and others as well.

Fear and diffidence make it difficult to make progress in the way of the Spirit. Have a big heart – otherwise you will accomplish nothing. You should not get caught up in details – be relaxed. Jesus is the God of peace – not anxiety. Let us ask Him to give us peace, save us from scruples and help us preserve a delicate conscience. Neither scruples nor doubt! Everything must be clear and precise. We must go forward with that peace of spirit that dispels scruples and doubt. This is the spirit I want you to have.

**94. Everything is in God’s hands.** Confidence shows a loving trust in Divine Providence which guides every step of our life. Let us abandon ourselves to God and leave everything in His hands. He is our Father and does everything in our best interest. We must never fear for the future of our Congregation or any individual. In everything – even little things – let us raise our hearts to God and trust in Him alone whatever happens. We do not base our confidence on our own human resources: talent, strength, virtue, etc or on the resources of others. We must do all we can for our part and then without fear leave the rest in the Lord’s hands. He never leaves something only half-done.

**95. Trust in Providence.** We are called to foster trust in Divine Providence: “Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?’” (Matthew 6,31). The Lord who feeds the birds will surely find sustenance for His apostles. If it is God’s will that we accept so many young candidates God will have to perform the same miracles He does at Cottolengo’s Little House of Divine Providence. There they care for “poor bodies” – here we care for “poor souls.”

We must trust in God but at the same time do our best to cooperate. How much does it cost to support a missionary? I am not so much concerned with finding enough money but rather that we deserve the money we receive. If we do not have the financial means to continue I will go to the Lord or Our Lady and say: “Either those in the missions are not doing their duty or there is a one in our midst who is not cooperating.” I do not doubt Providence. Without this kind of trust all is lost. At times there is not enough money to pay a bill that is coming due – and then the next day the money arrives and the bill is paid. I can assure you that I have never lost any sleep over money. I do not go looking for money but I would not be ashamed to beg for you and for the missions. Sometimes the Lord makes us wait – it is a sort of test. He wants us to remember that we are poor and He is the Master. If we cooperate He will always bless us.

In the Gospel Jesus warns us against being too anxious – this shows a lack of trust in God and too great an attachment to the things of earth. Trust in Divine Providence however does not mean we should not plan and seek to provide for the future. Each of us must work for the common good; we should take care of community property and not seek more than we need. If you lead a life of zeal

you will be blessed – even materially – by God: “Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice and all this will be added unto you” (Matthew 6,33). When you ask for your daily bread in the Our Father think first of Holy Communion, God’s Word and then the material bread. If God provides us so generously with material things how much more generous He will be with spiritual things. I so hope that our Congregations in general and each of you in particular would have this sort of overwhelming trust in God: “Whoever trusts in the Lord will not be disappointed” (Sirach 32,24).

## Charity

**96. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.** According to St. Augustine our house of holiness is crowned with charity. God and our neighbor are the objects or rather two aspects of the single object of charity: God in Himself and for Himself; our neighbor in God and for God.<sup>1</sup> Love for God is not just a sentiment, it is an act of the will. One can love very much without feeling anything – possibly even feel repugnance for the object of our love. You can feel greatly and even shed tears without really loving. Love of God is the first great commandment. When a doctor of the Law asked “Master which is the great of the commandments?” Jesus answered “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind” (Matthew 22,36-37). Mark adds the words “and with all your strength” (Mark 12,30).

According to St. Thomas holiness consists primarily of charity: “The perfection of Christian life per se and essentially consists in charity.” Charity is holiness: to love and to become a saint are the same thing. Where there is love there is everything. The other theological virtues are necessary because they are inseparably joined to charity. One cannot love without believing; one hopes for the thing one loves.

St. Francis de Sales says as much: “True holiness consists in loving God; the more one loves God the holier one is.” St. Augustine says: “Love and do what you will.” Anyone who loves God cannot offend Him but will serve Him faithfully. Charity is the synthesis and perfection of all virtue. This is why St. Paul says that charity is the “fulfillment of the Law” (Colossians 3,14). Undoubtedly without charity nothing else much matters. Even if we spoke the tongues of angels, if we had the gift of prophecy and knew all the mysteries, if we possessed all knowledge and had the faith to move mountains, even if we offered up our bodies to be burned and did not have charity it is of no avail! (Cf. I Corinthians 13,1ff).

**97. Love as friendship.** According to St. Thomas charity is friendship between God and man. God has chosen us from all eternity: “I have loved you with an eternal love” (Jeremiah 31,3). He takes pleasure in our company. “My delight is to be among the sons of man” (Proverbs 8,31). God, in effect, loves us; He bestows His grace continually to support us and make us saints; if we sin He pardons us. When we are afflicted He says: “Come to me all you who labor and are burdened and I will restore you” (Matthew 11,28). He has given us all we possess; He in no way needs us but is grateful for every act of virtue we offer Him and He rewards us with abundant grace. We must be equally grateful to Him saying over and over: “We give You thanks O Lord our God!” St. Jerome tells us to “desire or not desire the same things our friend desires or does not desire is the sign of true friendship.”

**98. Love God ardently.** St. Augustine says, “You have created us for Yourself and our heart will not rest until it rests in You.” How do we love God? We must love God ardently, enthusiastically. St. Therese of the Child Jesus was twenty-four years old when she was consumed by the love of God. And we who are missionaries? He is our heart and He asks for everything. You see it is not that we

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<sup>1</sup> For Allamano, as well as the Gospel, charity is indivisible; it is directed to God and our neighbor. Usually he speaks of charity towards our neighbor in the context of community life; this is what we are doing in these pages.

do not love the Lord but that we do not love Him the way and to the extent that He wants to be loved by us.

Our heart is already very small we ought not to divide it. St. Francis de Sales said that if he found a single fiber in his heart that did not belong to God he would rip it out mercilessly. What about us? Do we really love the Lord with our whole heart? If Jesus put to us the question He addressed to Peter, "Do you love me more than these others?" (John 21,15) what answer could we give? Here is an examination of conscience I suggest you make. Let us ask ourselves often – especially those of us who are missionaries – if our heart is free, is it undivided, is it constant? The Lord gives us everything - do we want to hold back in giving ourselves to Him?

Let us love God with our whole soul, with our whole will, willing what He wills and as He wills it. Let us show Him our love by avoiding evil and seeking perfection. We often deceive ourselves in every day life especially in times of trouble or aridity. Love of the will resists all things and remains firm even in the midst of adversity. It is easy to love the Lord when all is going smoothly, when that love is comfortable. But to love Him when there is darkness, when our spirit is clouded and our heart is cold – that is true love! We must say with St. Paul: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish [...] no creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8,35-39).

Let us love God with our whole mind and with all our strength. We must ask ourselves – what are we thinking? What decisions do we make? Is everything according to God's will? To love God with our whole mind means doing everything with a purity of intention: everything for Him and nothing for ourselves. To love with all our strength means loving the Lord to the greatest extent possible without fear of exaggerating. And we who are missionaries? If our heart is full of the love of God it will show in our life. Remember whoever is not already burning cannot spread fire.

**99. To grow in love.** We grow in the love of God through prayer: ask God often for charity, the queen of all virtues. St. Augustine said over and over again: "Lord, that I may love You." And St. Ignatius, "Grant me, O Lord, Your love and Your grace and it will be enough for me!" Let us seek Mary's intercession she is the "Mother of Holy Love." Let us seek also the intercession of those saints who were especially gifted with this love. Through meditation too we can set the heart ablaze with love. We should meditate especially on the Passion of the Lord. St. Francis de Sales said that Calvary is the training ground of lovers. Every phrase in the Our Father is an act of love for God. So too every phrase in the hymn Tantum Ergo. The words "We adore the Sacrament" constitute an act of love. To adore is to love. So too "faith makes up for what the senses miss" helps us be content that we do not see; we perceive nothing with our senses but we trust in His word and this is love. Again: "To the Father, to the Son, praise and glory." How many acts of love: that God be praised, that all love Him, that from all places His Greatness be acknowledged! All of this is love, pure love as long as we utter these beautiful words from our very hearts.

We grow in the love of God through our works: we do things which please God. As St. Gregory the Great teaches: "Action is the proof of charity." Jesus said, "If you love me you will observe my commandments" (John 14,15). The measure of our love for God is what we do. Let us not be happy with just saying the words – let us do the works! We especially must have a "thirst for souls" as did Our Lord. Through our every day actions we can be collaborators with the Redeemer. Everything here is designed to enable you to do good in the future. In the missions you must have a heart open to every weakness and therefore full of the love of God. St. Francis Xavier was brimming over with this love and this is why he was so zealous a missionary. Anyone who does not love will never succeed in doing good. You are blest, you have the chance to be apostles in the missions if you are saints! And you will be saints to the extent you are filled with the love of God.

We grow in the love of God through purity of intention. Purity of intention is an act of love – we refer all our actions to God alone, to His glory: "My God and my all!" The more perfect our

purpose the more perfect our work. The Lord has said, “If your eye be single, your whole body shall be full of light (i.e. all your works will be good before God)...If however the light that is in you be darkness, how great is the darkness!” (Matthew 6,22-23). How happy we will be if we refer everything to the Lord alone! He alone can bless and console us – He can make all our works successful. It is true that we dedicate all our thoughts, feelings and actions to the Lord every morning but this is not enough. We must renew this intention many times during the day. We must be careful to keep our intentions pure. God alone! To God alone honor and glory!

**100. To will what God wills.** We can find perfect holiness and complete happiness in doing God’s will. St. Basil claims that the secret of happiness, even in this world, is doing the will of God. Shortly after his conversion St. Paul asked, “Lord what do you will that I do?” (Acts 22,10). Cafasso explained the union of our will to God’s in this way: “To will what God wills; to will it in the same way, at the same time and in the same circumstances that He wills – and to will this for no other reason but that God wills it.” The Lord Jesus Christ gave us an example of this through His words and His deeds. When he prayed, worked or preached it was always to carry out the will of His Father. On the cross after saying all was consummated He bowed His head (Cf. John 19,30) – a sign that even at this last moment He was doing the will of His Father.

If our will is one with the will of God we will see things as He sees them. Similarly we must seek out His will in things great and small, public and private. We must do things well and expect nothing from others. God alone is enough! If misfortune occurs we must accept it without complaint; we must see in it the will of God. And when Shimei threw rocks and curses at David, David told Abishai that he wanted to kill him: “But he curses because the Lord has said unto him, Curse David; who then shall say, Why have you done this?” (II Samuel 16,10). The Lord can always draw good out of evil.

Be careful, though, sometimes self-love makes us see the will of God where it does not exist. We deceive ourselves that we are doing God’s will but often it is only our own will we are doing. Let us keep our eyes fixed on heaven – that is our goal, God alone. We should not be concerned about the success of our work God will reward us according to our effort and not our success – sometimes the Lord allows our work to be unsuccessful to teach us humility. This is why taking aim is so important. We need only begin our work for the Lord and He will see to the rest. What made saints in the past and what continues to make them now is will, good will – not holding anything back when serving God.

We must examine ourselves objectively and then say: “Lord, that I may know You and Your holy will!” Self-love can hide His will from us. St. Gertrude recited this short prayer many times a day: Lovable Jesus, not my but Your will be done. We should say this too – especially in times of adversity. In the Our Father we ask that God’s kingdom spread and immediately afterwards that His holy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We must strive to live always according to God’s will.

All of this will naturally cost us something. But as the saints say it is only the beginning that is painful; afterwards it is a pleasure. Let us examine ourselves seriously. It is easy enough to say “Thy will be done” in moments of fervor. But practically speaking are we always so keen to do God’s will? We must surrender our own will and examine every activity – is this really what God wants me to do? It is not a bad thing that we alternate offices both here and in the missions: those who exercise authority should return to obedience. This will accustom us to seek and carry out God’s will, to work only for Him. Let us say to God: I accept everything, I will everything without reservation – not just in general but in the smallest details. Not a single thought, word or work that is not for You, My God! If we carry out the will of God at all times we will not only enjoy perfect peace but will acquire so much merit.

What comforts me most is that I have always done what the Lord asked of me. It is a comfort to know that I have never refused. When Msgr. Gastaldi appointed me spiritual director of the

seminary I went to him and said: “I am too young and I wanted to be a simple parish priest one day – but I am an obedient son.” He answered me: “You want to be a parish priest. I am giving you the most important parish in Turin: the seminary.” When he sent me to the Consolata Sanctuary I was not yet thirty years old and there was a hospice there for aged priests. I asked him, “Is this really the will of God? I am not yet thirty years old, I don’t have the experience.” “Look,” he said, “being young is a defect that is gradually corrected. Since you are young if you make any mistakes you will have the time to correct them.” You understand – we must be where the Lord wants us. If I had refused, Msgr. Gastaldi would have accepted this but I would not have embarked upon the road the Lord had chosen for me.

**101. The mission is entrusted to the one who loves much.** Love/charity towards God is especially necessary for those like us who have a vocation and are charged with communicating it. “I have come to cast fire on the earth and how I want it to be kindled!” (Luke 12,49). How can we communicate this sacred fire if it is not already burning within us? Before entrusting His flock to Peter the Lord asked him three times if he loved Him. Jesus will not entrust the mission of proclaiming the Gospel to those who do not love Him but to those who love Him and love Him very much. It is not enough to love Him half-heartedly we must love Him totally. Only great love can enflame zealous missionaries and enable them to bear willingly the sacrifices of an apostle’s life; only great love will guarantee the success of our efforts. Everything the Lord allows to happen to us is for our own good. We must say to Him from our heart: Thy will be done! We must strive not just for conformity to God’s will but for genuine unity with it – this is something even more perfect. Love conquers everything, love overcomes everything.

Let us see if we follow these rules in our every day life. If so the Lord will use us to accomplish much good just as He used St. Francis Xavier. If we carry out the will of God always and with purity of intention our days will be full: from morning to evening there will be a continuous amassing of treasure in heaven. At the end of life we will find that we have accomplished great things even if at present it does not look like we have done very much at all.

## 6 Religious and Missionary Vows

### Consecrated Life

**102. A new baptism.** The Constitutions tell us that we are here in this congregation first to be good and holy religious and then to be missionaries. Think about this. We are in congregations that are both religious and missionary. What does consecrated life in the religious state mean? It means a state of perfection – not that we are perfect when we embrace this life but because we strive for perfection continually and with total commitment. It is a new baptism, a burnt-offering superior to all other sacrifices. In other sacrifices we offer the Lord external things but in religious life we give Him ourselves. It is as it were a continuing, slow, low-grade martyrdom through which we sacrifice our property, our comfort and our will.

All Christians are called to perfection; the Lord has said, “Be you perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5,48). The call to holiness consists principally of love of God and love of our neighbor. For consecrated individuals striving for perfection involves not just observing the commandments but following the evangelical counsels as best we can with God’s grace.

**103. In freedom.** All religious congregations make vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. St. Thomas tells us that with these vows the will remains strong, one wins greater merit and one gives to God not just what one does but one’s freedom as well. St. Anselm adds that through the vows one offers the Lord not just the use of a thing but ownership as well, not just the fruit but the tree too. The vows do not eliminate our freedom rather they increase it. They make us masters of ourselves and less dominated by passion. In the words of St. Augustine, “Oh happy obligation that forces us to do what is better.”

All congregations renew their vows annually. Why? To increase fervor, keep their memory alive and reinforce the determination to observe them. Do not let your vows intimidate you. We are as peaceful now as we were before – no even more peaceful. Besides being a second baptism the vows represent the beginning of a new life of perfection and holiness. This total sacrifice of our souls and bodies is very pleasing to the Lord. He will shower us with grace; we will feel stronger, more courageous and more at peace. We must abandon ourselves entirely to Him and submit totally to His will. Let Him treat us as He will and we will soon achieve genuine holiness. Never forget that our religious vocation is not a contract but a vocation. The Lord does not like contracts. He is always generous. He has given us our vocation and He will not take it away. We may change but He never does. All we need do is what we promised. We have given ourselves to the Lord – we must look back whatever the cost.

**104. For mission.** Your vows are the vows of missionaries. When you make or renew these vows think of the missions, profess your thirst for zeal and the desire to work in evangelisation. We should make a vow to serve the missions even at the cost of our lives. We would be happy to die in harness. When you make or renew your vows think seriously what they imply. The Lord will grant you your desires.

### Evangelical Poverty<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In a letter dated December 8, 1916 Allamano wrote a “Treatise on Poverty.” He describes the meaning of the vow and the virtue as well as how poverty meets the needs of religious lives devoted to the missions. In January 5, 1917 conferences to the male and female missionaries he said: “For some time now I have wanted to provide you with a “short treatise on poverty”. Now after two years work with the help of Canon G. Camisassa here it is. It is subtle and complicated material. It is based on the work of the great theologians, St. Thomas, Suarez, St. Alphonsus and others. We have collected everything that is certain and in our efforts to be specific we have weighed every word. Please

**105. “I have given you an example” (John 13, 15).** The life of Jesus reflected all the virtues but there is one in particular that He seemed to favor and of which He wanted to be our model: poverty. St. Paul tells us as much: “Though he was rich for your sake he became poor so that through his poverty you might be enriched” (II Corinthians 8,9). Therefore He was born poor, lived poor and died in utter poverty on the cross. Jesus was born poor by His own choice; He chose a poor woman, Mary, to be His mother and a man who earned his living through manual labor to be His father and guardian: St. Joseph. During His public life he could affirm: “The Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head” (Matthew 8, 20). The very first of the beatitudes is “Blessed are the poor for theirs is the kingdom of God!” (Luke 6,20). For His burial he needed a borrowed sheet and a borrowed tomb.

The Lord’s teaching and example are the most powerful incentive to make us respect, love and practice poverty. This is all the more reason why we should imitate the Lord as closely as possible. Following His example all the saints loved and lived poverty. St. Francis of Assisi called it “his mistress.”

**106. The life of virtues.** All other virtues in one way or another derive life from poverty. If we examine each virtue we will discover that it takes root and flourishes where there is a love of poverty. Can faith exist without poverty? How can we claim to have faith if we know Jesus said “Blessed are the poor” and still think of wealth as a blessing and the rich as happy people. Unfortunately at times we too favor the rich over the poor. If we have faith we must think, speak and act according to this principle: “Blessed are the poor!”

We hope for heaven and are little concerned with the things of this world. The sacred author tells us: Blessed is the man who has not run after riches nor has he placed his hope in wealth and treasure! Who is this man? We will call him blessed (Cf. Sirach 31,8-9). It is so very easy to trust in wealth. We must resist this temptation and say over and over: “I place my hope in You, O Lord.”

Love of God cannot exist without poverty of spirit. If we are to love God with all our heart we must not have other attachments especially to things – otherwise our heart will be divided. People sacrifice their possessions and embrace voluntary poverty to free their heart to love God and give themselves totally to Him. If we hope to accomplish good for those among whom we work our hearts cannot be attached to the things of this world. Speaking of holiness St. Bernard said we must be pools and not channels. But on the subject of poverty I would say that we must be channels and not pools. Without poverty of spirit we can be neither humble nor chaste. Poverty protects missionary zeal. St. Bernard quotes the Lord when speaking about detachment: “And I, if I be lifted up will draw all things to me” (John 12,32). It follows that our success in proclaiming the Gospel will be determined by our poverty – at least our poverty in spirit.

**107. With the strength of vows.** The Lord’s first counsel to the rich young man is: “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor” (Matthew 19,21). All religious congregations put poverty before all else because according to St. Thomas, “voluntary poverty is the first step on the road to perfection.” St. Ignatius Loyola defines poverty as a “wall of defense for religious orders.”

A religious congregation will live and thrive to the extent that it maintains the spirit of poverty. When a community abandons this principle its spirit begins to decline. The same can be said about individual community members: they will make progress on the path of perfection to the extent that they are faithful to the poverty they have professed. This is something that must be taken seriously. When this vow is neglected a community is nearing its end. If poverty is observed according to the dictates of the Constitutions the community will be blessed and will forge ahead.

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receive it as a letter from your superior and therefore from God. May the Lord grant you the light and grace to live the vow and virtue of poverty well. The spirit and well-being of the Congregation depends on this.” The following pages reflect the spirit and substance of that “treatise” even when we do not cite it directly.



Essentially the vow of poverty consists in the renunciation of the right to use or dispose at will of temporal possessions without the legitimate superior's permission. This is the simple vow that we and all other modern congregations profess. The solemn vow, on the other hand, involves radical renunciation of any kind of ownership of material possessions. This is the major difference between a simple and a solemn vow of poverty. Why do we profess the simple vow? Because essentially poverty does not consist in sacrificing all possessions but in a renunciation of the right to dispose at will— without the superior's permission - of community or personal property. We make this renunciation out of love for the Lord; this is the specific reason we make this vow. The words "Blessed are the poor" are addressed to all. The psalmist tells us: "Do not attach you heart to wealth, even abundant wealth" (Psalm 61, 11).

**108. What is necessary as the poor.** St. Bernard tells us: "It is not poverty in itself that is virtuous but rather the love of poverty." A poor man can be without resources but that by no way means he has the virtue of poverty. Consecrated persons must avoid not just those things that are contrary to the vow but must be committed to observing perfect poverty.

What does perfect poverty require? Eliminate everything vain or superfluous. Nothing vain or superfluous should be found among consecrated persons. Therefore we must eschew extraordinary clothes, dwellings, furniture, food or anything else. St. Paul writes "When we have something to eat or wear we should be satisfied" (I Timothy 6,8). We have made a vow of poverty and should therefore be satisfied with what a poor man would think necessary.

If we are to grow in the virtue of poverty we must from time to time bear patiently and cheerfully with the lack of what is necessary. It is so very easy to make this vow and then never feel any of its effects. We would call that the vow to have everything that is necessary. If there is something we want and do not have – this is poverty. It is precisely not having everything we might want that makes us practice poverty. It is a good thing if I lack what is necessary from time to time. With this spirit we will not look for exceptions in the community. I do not like exceptions. True, what is necessary is necessary – but never forget the Lord provides what poor people need and not what the rich require. If we are not used to deprivation we will never be good missionaries.

Do not rely on the fact that many support the Congregation. Sometimes there are not enough benefactors. Never forget that our benefactors make sacrifices to support us. We must not just pray for them; we must meet their sacrifices with sacrifices of our own. We must be satisfied with what is absolutely necessary and bear with occasional deprivation. Benefactors provide us with what is necessary. When I read the list of offerings in the periodical I am led to reflect on their significance. I stop to pray for these people some of whom are dead. Those offerings are the result of tears and blood. Can we not make a similar sacrifice?

The virtue of poverty involves total detachment from the necessary and convenient things we may use. This is the essence of poverty of spirit. We must treasure this detachment of the heart. Remember every attachment, even the most trivial, can stunt our growth. Practice detachment from all individuals and all things. It does not really matter if a bird is tied with a rope or a thread in neither case can he fly. Avoid even slight attachments to people or things. If there is such a thread of attachment let us present it to the Heart of Jesus and it will become a golden thread – the thread of renunciation. We will accomplish good in the missions to the extent that we are detached from people and things. Sometimes we go off to the missions dreaming of martyrdom and then lose our way because of a piece of furniture. We can create a totally false idea of what we really need. Attachments will destroy our peace of mind and even lead us to acts of disobedience. This is why I insist that we not be attached to anything no matter how trivial; otherwise when we are transferred to a new mission we end up taking everything from our former assignment. If we have this spirit of detachment in our community the Lord will bless us.

**109. Take care of everything.** A spirit of poverty involves taking care of everything – treating things with care and respect. Unfortunately we are often very careful with our own things and careless with community property – almost as if community property belonged to no one and could be neglected or used carelessly. This is unjust. If it is wrong to mistreat our own property this is even more the case with things that belong to the whole community. This is not just a disregard for poverty - it is unjust. Unfortunately this is something we seldom think of – hence my insistence on this point.

A spirit of poverty involves working together lest we ruin or waste what we use – we must never forget that we live on the charity of others. It is a pleasure to see someone take an interest in the community's possessions: closing doors, closing windows, putting things back in their proper place, turning off the lights, etc. I am not telling you to interfere in things that do not concern you but do not ruin anything, handle everything with care, do not use more than you need, etc. We must make this spirit our own: handle everything with care. I still have the watch I had as a seminarian...

Poverty is delicate virtue and it is very easy to transgress. Even if we have more than enough of something we should not use more than is appropriate. We must be convinced that everything belongs to God. Begin now to cultivate this sensitivity, this concern for how we use things – otherwise you will waste our resources in the missions. We must be committed to each other – this is a spirit of unity, a family spirit. All of us must be involved and committed to the good of the Congregation. This is how we must act if we want God to help us now and in the future. We must not sit idly by waiting for Providence to come to our aid: the Lord will not always work miracles.

**110. Work like poor men.** We have spoken about poverty as affective and effective detachment from temporal possessions. Poverty involves another element - work: we must work like poor men. Missionaries must do manual labor. Doing this labor saves the community money. Making an effort to earn money for the community is also part of poverty. We must be active members of the community: this is not a college where we pay tuition but rather a family to which we all contribute. If we have some talent we can exploit we should be happy, willing and feel obliged to use it for the benefit of the community.

More than any other consecrated person missionaries should have a spirit of detachment and radical poverty.

### **Chastity for the Kingdom<sup>2</sup>**

**111. Be chaste.** Holy Scripture teaches us the excellence of this virtue. The Redeemer chose to be born of a virgin mother. He especially loved the apostle John because he was pure, chaste, a virgin. At His death he entrusted Our Lady to John's care – he gave a Virgin to a virgin.

The word “chastity” is ordinarily derived from “castigo” [to punish]. St. Thomas explains this – through reason the chaste punish concupiscence. As consecrated persons we live virginal chastity. This consists in our firm, inner determination to exclude anything contrary to virginal integrity. Father G. Semeria remarks appropriately that virginal chastity is not a prerogative of the body but rather of the spirit. Similarly St. Augustine tells us: “Who can doubt that chastity, as a virtue, resides in the spirit. It will not fail if we remain determined in our heart and our will.”

Virginal chastity is absolutely necessary for consecrated men and women. Missionaries are exposed to the gravest dangers and must therefore be strong in this virtue. To accomplish good among people you must be seen as somehow “supernatural” beings detached from this world: “You are not of this world” (John 15,19). Chastity will make you look like this and your presence alone will

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<sup>2</sup> In Allamano's time ascetic theology considered perfect chastity from the perspective of the Kingdom rather than morality. He shared this point of view and spent less time on the theology of chastity – of which he was well aware – and concentrated on the means to preserve chastity.

attract others. If you are chaste, always chaste, I am certain you will be successful. The Lord communicates Himself to the pure of heart and you will make miracles. I would address Paul's words to Timothy to each of you: "Keep yourself pure" (I Timothy 5,22). How can you pour a bottle of wine into a bottle filled with water? You pour out the water first and then pour in the wine. Well – we must empty our hearts of all worldly affections and fill them with the love of God. I would rather that you be more attracted by the beauty of the virtue than repelled by the ugliness of the vice. Be chaste!

**112. In view of the priesthood.** Inspired by the Holy Spirit the Catholic Church has since apostolic times and willed that its priests be chaste. A priest needs all virtues but this one in particular. I would urge all of you hoping to become priests to think seriously about the necessity of this virtue. Remember, one of the first signs of a vocation is chastity. Certain and solid chastity is absolutely necessary. Strive for purity of life whatever the cost. Examine yourselves closely. Are you ready to lead a life of perfect chastity and to make whatever internal or external sacrifices required to preserve this chastity? If with the help of God you feel the strength and the desire to do this, take courage and do not be afraid. The God who is your hope will also be your strength.

**113. Virtue of the heart.** St. Paul writes to the Thessalonians: "You know the norms we have given you from the Lord Jesus. This is the will of God, that you achieve holiness: that you abstain from all uncleanness and that you possess your body in holiness and honor" (I Thessalonians 4,1-4). The Apostle repeats this injunction over and over again. Chastity is the virtue of the heart. Do not lose courage if you are tempted. Gold is refined in the fire and the Lord purifies us with these weaknesses. If it is for our good and He will deliver us – but in the meantime He wants us to be purified by these tests. Let us be humble and trusting and we will go forward in the Lord. Let us make acts of love for God. It is easy and quick to make such an act – we need only draw breath.

**114. Treasure in vessels of clay.** Chastity is a "treasure we bear in vessels of clay so that it does not appear that this extraordinary strength comes from us and not from God" (II Corinthians 4,7). To preserve this treasure we must be vigilant and pray. All agree on this point: the Scriptures, the Fathers and the spiritual masters. Pray, pray well and pray always. Prayer is necessary for all grace but more especially for chastity. St. Cyprian writes: "The first and foremost way to strive for chastity is to seek help from above." St. Gregory says that "prayer is the guardian of purity." St. John Chrysostom tells us that prayer and fasting are like two wings that carry the soul over the storm, increase its fervor and scare off its enemies. No one and nothing, he tells us, is stronger than the person who prays.

We must ask the Lord for chastity and ask for it continually. Be well aware that it is not enough to pray every now and then, make occasional visits to the chapel, say three Hail Marys morning and evening, join in common acts during the day – we must have the very spirit of prayer. It must become a habit – especially when tempted – to seek refuge in the heart of Jesus and let Him respond for us. This is what St. Augustine did – he found refuge in the wounds of His Divine Savior. There will always be temptations but if we hide in the heart of Jesus they will never prevail.

The indispensable means without which it is almost impossible to remain chaste is devotion to Our Blessed Lady. She dispenses all graces – and especially this one. We must place our chastity under her special protection and consecrate it to her; we must repeat over and over again, "Mother most pure, mother most chaste, Virgin of virgins, pray for us!" If we pray, God will grant us the precious gift of life-long chastity.

To preserve chastity we must practice internal and external mortification. The saints and all who wanted to live good Christian lives have always done this. St. Paul says, "I treat my body harshly and I keep it in bondage lest after I have preached to others I myself should be found wanting" (I

Corinthians 9,27). It is stupid to treat our flesh gently or imagine that it is not rebellious: “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for they are adversaries and thus you may not do what you may want to do” (Galatians 5,17).

Mortify the sense of taste: eat to live and do your duty – do not live to eat. Do not omit what is necessary but practice little acts of mortification. Mortify your eyes: be relaxed but at the same time reserved and mortified. To acquire mastery of the eyes from time to time avoid looking at what is permitted. The saints knew how to see God in a flower but it may be helpful to avoid looking at flowers occasionally. Become accustomed to cold and heat, to what is rough and not smooth. Avoid idleness and keep busy all the time. Work not just out of duty, obedience or poverty but to gain control over your body. Curb pride and vanity through humility. Woe to those who are not humble: “Whoever thinks he is standing should take care he does not fall down” (I Corinthians 10,12). St. Francis de Sales said “Chastity without humility is vanity.”

I feel confident that you will be both sure and tranquil in this area because the Lord will shower an abundance of grace upon you if you live close to Him and use all the means we have discussed.

### **Missionary Obedience**

**115. A habit for all.** The most excellent of the three vows is obedience. With this vow we offer God even more than we do with poverty and chastity.

Obedience must become a habit for all of us. Think of Jesus’ example: “Be of the same mind as Jesus Christ, who although He was by nature divine did not consider equality with God something to be grasped; He emptied Himself and took the form of a servant, human nature and being human He humbled Himself and became obedient even unto death” (Philippians 2,5-8). “My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to carry out His work” (John 4,34); “He who sent me is with me and does not leave me alone because I do always the things that please Him” (John 8,29).

The saints tell us that obedience is the certain road to heaven. St. John Chrysostom calls it “the sure navigation that leads to heaven.” St. Augustine adds that obedience is the guardian of all the other virtues. And St. Thomas affirms that it is always superior to the other virtues because it gives God the best gift: the gift of our will.

Obedience works miracles and if we are obedient we too will work miracles especially in the work of evangelization. It does not matter whether we do much or little – what matters is that we are obedient. Obedience helps destroy our pride and brings us peace of mind. Through obedience we know we are carrying out God’s will. This is not a place for half willed or half obedient individuals.

**116. Fundamental virtue.** Obedience is an absolute necessity in a religious community and this is even more true in the missions. In the words of our Constitutions, “The fundamental virtue of a missionary congregation is the practical spirit of absolute obedience to one’s superior. Without this we cannot achieve unity of purpose or success in our apostolate.”<sup>3</sup> These lines are taken word for word from the White Fathers’ Rule. Obedience is a synthesis of all the means necessary to become ideal missionaries; obedience not just to the decisions of our superiors but to their desires as well. Most of the problems that arise in the missions trace their origin to failures in obedience. This is the principal and fundamental virtue of our congregation – it should be second nature to us. Like St. Ignatius<sup>4</sup> I would like to see obedience as your defining characteristic.

<sup>3</sup> Allamano is quoting article 37 of the Male Missionaries’ Constitutions (1909) and article 45 of the Female Missionaries’ Constitutions (1913).

<sup>4</sup> Allamano took St. Ignatius’ letter to Jesuits on the subject of obedience and addressed it to Consolata Missionaries. He wanted its spirit and contents to be their defining characteristic. In the Church’s recent thought, obedience and dialogue involve the total openness to obedience that Allamano refers to as “the perfection of obedience” or “blind obedience.” We have kept his terminology even though it is no longer in use; we think it better expresses the depth of his thought.

**117. Supernatural Virtue.** We must be ready to obey our superior “as if he were the Lord Himself.” It is the supernatural motivation that gives value and merit to obedience. God does not want us to obey for human motives; this would make us no different from the many who obey authority because they must or they expect a reward or they do so out of human respect. We on the other hand must see God in our superiors: “Deus est! [It is God!]”

Keep this firm in mind and never forget it: our obedience must be absolutely based on supernatural motivation. Have faith and go beyond appearances. Woe to the individual who thinks he is obeying a human person! Our obedience will be supernatural to the extent that we are obeying God in the person of our superior. With the spirit of faith it is not difficult to obey any superior or whatever he may order.

**118. Universal, prompt, heartfelt and simple.** Our Constitutions describe obedience as: universal, prompt and heartfelt. The perfection of obedience is found in the simplicity and generosity that constitute blind obedience. Universal obedience – we must obey everyone making no distinction between one superior and another. Anyone who does not practice this sort of obedience cannot please the Lord and will make no progress on the road to holiness. Universal obedience means making no distinction between the ways a command may be given, between the commands – whether they are small or great, substantive or trivial. This is the spirit I would like you to have. Do not be approximately obedient but scrupulous about every detail - place, time and method. The Lord will see our good will and will reward our obedience; with Him at our side and we will accomplish great things. Something done on a whim will never succeed – the Lord will not bless it.

St. Bernard says the genuinely obedient individual never hesitates and is ready to accept and carry out his superior’s orders. Obedience must be prompt – it must be our concern every hour and every minute. It is not genuine obedience if we hold back and carry out an order when it is convenient. We must obey promptly in everything. Not everything that is good is well done. It is only so when the Lord wills it. We must do not what we want but what we ought – this defines obedience. Anyone who neglects these dispositions is not just lacking in the spirit of obedience, he is lacking the spirit of community.

Besides being prompt obedience must be heartfelt. St. Paul writes in the Epistle to the Romans “We give thanks to God that you have obeyed from the heart all that was passed on to you” (Romans 6,17). If we do not obey from the heart our obedience is imperfect and of little merit. St. Bernard tells us that a cheerful face and gentle words are the worthy sign of obedience. Therefore our obedience should come from the heart and not be something forced upon us.

We must be ready to obey immediately. If we have a problem or something to say we should do so and then obey cheerfully : “The Lord loves a cheerful giver” (II Corinthians 9,7). A sullen face, word or gesture is unworthy of us.

There are three degrees to the perfection of obedience: to carry out the order given, to will what the superior wills and to accept intellectually whatever he orders. We must be generous: we should not be happy with the first or second degree of perfection – we must go right to the extreme and bend our judgment to the superior’s. This is blind obedience – blind, but it sees a great deal! – it accepts an order with simplicity and carries it out. Then we will make greater progress and achieve greater serenity. Blind obedience does not mean carrying out orders like a robot: we must be wide awake if we are to do what we are commanded in the best possible way. If we understand this we will learn how wise obedience can be. We must examine our practice of obedience often and be determined to strive earnestly for perfection. Whoever obeys blindly will have very good sight indeed – he will see into spiritual things with the very eye of God.

**119. Learn obedience.** What are the means to learn this sort of obedience? The principal ones are these: first of all – humility. The humble individual knows he can make mistakes and is not attached to his own judgment; even if a superior is mistaken in his command the subject is never mistaken in his obedience. Next, we must see God in our superiors and in their orders. Furthermore we must imitate Our Lord who was obedient even unto death on the cross. Finally we must follow the example of the saints. Obedience is the cunning of the saints.

**120. Obedience to the Constitutions.** When St. Vincent de Paul gave his congregation a rule he did it with these words: “I give you the rules the Lord inspired me to compose – accept them as coming from the hand of God.” I feel I can say the same thing. I can assure you, God was guiding me. I do not mean in some extraordinary way – but in the ordinary way the Lord was guiding me. We studied and reflected on every word; we prayed over every word; we worked on this text for years and now it represents the will of God. I ask you to receive it in a spirit of faith. We could say that your holiness will depend on how you observe these dispositions. Study and observe them; give the greatest importance to both great and trivial elements. All of this is golden. I so much hope that the observance of these rules will greatly benefit the spirit of our community. We are not in a school but in a family – we must make each other holy. Each of you must be a pillar of the congregation to the extent that others may see an example to be imitated. If we should ever lose the Constitutions each of you should be a living exemplar of what they contain.

## 7 Missionary Attitudes

### Passion for Mission

**121. Even sacrificing one's life.** St. Augustine tells us that apostolic zeal is the result of love and in fact is the same thing. Not any love but an intense and burning love. Apostolic zeal is the defining characteristic of a missionary. We do not go to the missions on a whim or as a tourist but out of love for God and this love is inseparable from love of neighbor. As missionaries – more even than as Christians – we are committed to promoting God's glory through our work to save souls.<sup>1</sup> This is the purpose of our own special vocation. We must have so much love that we are even willing to sacrifice our lives. Without this sort of love you may well have the name "missionary" but you do not have the reality or the substance.

Dionysius the Areopagite wrote that collaborating in the salvation of souls is the most divine of God's works. God uses us: St. Paul says, "we are in fact collaborators with God" (I Corinthians 3,9). Think of it: co-workers with God for the salvation of mankind! It is almost as if God needed our help. The Church entrusts us with the great mission it received from the Risen Lord: to proclaim the Gospel. This is the supreme work.

Creation, Incarnation, Redemption, descent of the Holy Spirit – all of these events have one goal: the salvation of mankind. "Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (II Timothy 2,10). God Himself asks us to be part of this endeavor – who can reject His invitation? Is there anyone of us who does not think of his vocation as a blessing?

"I chose you, and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide" (John 15,16). This call is a great gift Jesus gives us but it implies an obligation on our part. "Woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel! (I Corinthians 9,16). Remember it is not enough that we preach – we must devote ourselves to all the work and sacrifice the life of an apostle requires whatever the cost. "We must work and work," St. Joseph Cafasso always said, "we will have time enough to rest in heaven." We should have no regrets if our missionary commitment wears us out. Like St. Francis Xavier we must devote ourselves to prayer.

**122. To be apostles we need fire.** Seeking the peace of a monastery as a means to avoid work is not love of God. This is the time of work and sacrifice! Let us make our own the words of Paul: "I do everything for the Gospel" (I Corinthians 9,23). Everything! I will wear myself out, I will sacrifice myself. We must present the Lord not vague intentions or desires but genuine apostolic work.

St. Bernard says an apostle must be enflamed with charity, filled with knowledge and constant. The genuine apostle is enflamed with charity, with the passion to know and make Our Lord known; he seeks not his own good but that of others. Jesus said, "I came to bring fire to the earth and how I would like to see it spread!" (Luke 12,49). An apostle must have fire. If we are neither hot nor cold, if we are only lukewarm we will never succeed in anything. A human being is alive to the extent that he works for love of God. We can maintain intimacy with the Lord and work at the same time. If there is love, there is zeal: this means that we will never be reluctant nor will we place any limit on our devotion to the missions. What we can do today must never be put off until tomorrow. Those who do not burn with this divine fire will never be missionaries!

Our apostolic commitment must be supported and perfected by knowledge. I have already spoken to you about this. We must be knowledgeable and therefore we must study; we must begin right now to learn all that is necessary and not expect a later miraculous infusion of knowledge. A parish priest

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<sup>1</sup> Allamano used the expression "save souls" to describe the specific work of an apostle. We do not want to distort his thought but we regularly use the expression "work/collaborate to save souls." This is in line with what Paul says in *I Corinthians* 3,9 – a text Allamano cited – where the apostles are described as "collaborators with God" for salvation.

wrote to me: “There is a cleric here that isn’t very intelligent – but good enough to be a missionary.” This is outrageous! Not ‘good enough to be a missionary’ – keep him yourself. The missions need knowledgeable people.

Finally, the genuine apostle is stable – he is both patient and constant. Constancy means not getting discouraged when results are disappointing. St. Bernard tells us “God expects you to treat an illness – not cure it.” In other words we must proclaim the Gospel and God will work the conversions. We are eager to do good and long for the day we can accomplish something. To long for the day we will leave for the missions is a good thing as long as our goal is to proclaim the Gospel. We need not worry there is room and work for everyone. Let us take courage! The Lord thirsts for souls and it’s up to us to quench that thirst. He wants everyone to know the truth and achieve salvation and He wants us to be the instrument to accomplish this. If we could only understand God’s will in this. We must cultivate these feelings beginning right now; we must prepare for mission with prayer, study and work; we must do this preparation conscientiously because one day it will help us do good.

During Eucharistic Adoration we sing Psalm 116 which has special meaning for missionaries. It is almost a duet between evangelizers and those being evangelized. In the first verse the people are called to give glory to God: “Praise the Lord, all you peoples; give him glory all you nations” (v. 1). The second verse expresses our gratitude for the Lord’s mercy: “because his love for us is great and his faithfulness endures forever” (v. 2). All of us together – we and they – are united joyously in a song of praise and thanksgiving to God for calling people to the faith.

## **Gentleness**

**123. Jesus is our model.** The importance of gentleness is clear in the teachings and example of Jesus: “Learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart” (Matthew 11,29). One need only read the Gospel to discover how Jesus loved and practiced gentleness. When the Jews accused Him of being possessed by the devil He replied simply: “I have no devil” (John 8,49). All through His passion He remains silent – and when He does happen to say something His words are gentle: “Why do you strike me?” (John 18,23). And how very gentle He is with the apostles! To Judas in Gethsemane He says: “Friend, have you come here for this?” (Matthew 26,50). According to St. Paul gentleness was Jesus’ defining characteristic. “I entreat you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ” ( II Corinthians 10,1). St. Peter too emphasizes this virtue of Jesus: “When he was reviled he did not revile in return” (I Peter 2,23). Isaiah too presented the Messiah as a gentle lamb: “He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth” (Isaiah 53,7). Jesus reveals Himself to us as a model of meekness – something to be embraced and imitated. Believe me missionaries have much need of this virtue.

**124. Necessary in mission.** In the missions we will find gentleness of extraordinary importance. We may think it necessary to be gentle now but what will happen in the missions? If we are easygoing we may think we are already gentle. But this is not enough – we must possess the virtue of gentleness. Violent episodes in the past have alienated people. Allow me to say – with genuine sorrow – how much I disapprove of missionaries who in spite of my advice have used harsh words and have even struck local people. I wept when I heard this and I prayed that the Lord would make the victim overlook this awful conduct. Another missionary noted in his diary: “People still recall how harsh that priest was.” We must not deceive ourselves: our anger is not apostolic zeal. We may think anger is sometimes justified – it is not. I am very attached to gentleness. Experience teaches us that missionaries will accomplish good to the extent they are gentle. Never forget how very important I think this virtue is.

**125. Work on our heart.** Gentleness is a moral virtue that is absolutely necessary in our relations



with others if we hope to achieve any good. The Lord tells us: “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5,5). This means that the meek will be masters of their own hearts and eventually masters of the hearts of others and of God Himself. Ask the Lord to make you well acquainted with this virtue; ask Him to make you recognize its importance.

Anger is the opposite of gentleness. St. Thomas defines gentleness as “the virtue that controls anger according to right reason” – it keeps anger within limits: not excessive and not at the wrong time or place. It is not an easily acquired virtue; it takes time, effort and violence. To acquire this virtue we must struggle and face or at least not avoid things that upset us. St. Basil thinks gentleness the most elevated of virtues; it is the most important virtue for those who must deal with others.

Let us listen to Paul’s words to Titus: “Remember ... be not contentious, be gentle and show meekness toward all men” (Titus 3,2). We must be as gentle as possible in our speech and actions on every occasion. We must be gentle when we are in a good or bad mood, when we are happy or suffering. We must be gentle with everyone – even the most difficult people. Paul goes on to say: “We also were once foolish” (Titus 3,3) – in other words we too have our shortcomings. If today we are no longer afflicted with anger we must have patience with others. This is the long-term, intense and formative commitment to which you are called and which you must embrace from this very moment if you want to be missionaries for all seasons. Learn self-control in the minor contretemps that arise now and you will be successful in the much more difficult problems to be encountered in the missions.

## **Energy and Constancy**

**126. Forge ahead with full determination.** Mountain roads are full of curves; this makes them easier to navigate but it makes the journey longer. If we avoid the curves and go up directly the climb will be more strenuous but we will reach the top sooner. This holds true for our journey to holiness. We must not let ourselves be bogged down; we must straighten up and forge ahead with full determination.

Sometime we complain that we do not really enjoy what we do. This is easy to understand – we are unenthusiastic and less than generous. We would like the Lord to make us saints without any effort on our part – this is certainly not spiritual enthusiasm. This is how we are made: we begin with good intentions but cannot always sustain our enthusiasm.

Our life has value to the extent that we are working for ourselves and others. We would so like to spend hours in front of the Blessed Sacrament but alas can only spare a few minutes and then must go off and work. I always smile when I hear someone say there is so much work. The more work there is the more we accomplish if we work enthusiastically. This is the hallmark of a missionary. A genuine missionary knows how to double his efforts. If we are active we will have time for everything – and even time left over.

**127. Value time.** We must so respect and value time that we waste not a minute of it. St. Bernard tells us there is nothing more precious than time and adds there is nothing so little respected. Unfortunately we do not value time enough; we do not realize that every minute has enormous value for eternity. The saints held this gift – time – in great esteem.

There are so many ways we can waste time. We must examine ourselves closely. We can waste time by doing something wrong: being lazy, not doing the good we ought or not doing it as God would wish it. This must be our common determination: we must value time. If we do this we will one day reap the reward.

Cottolengo was a Canon at Corpus Domini Church. He could have led a peaceful life: praying the Office, taking walks, going to dinner without worry ... But you know what he accomplished. I too could have led a life of ease: praying the office, dinner, reading the newspaper, taking a siesta ...

and then ... and then die of boredom! Is this the life I should be leading? We are destined to love the Lord and we must do good – all the good possible. Act, act – our time is short. The Lord distributes His grace in direct proportion to the energy we expend. Do things well but do them with ease. Take a good look at what you accomplish and what you could do.

**128. A high degree of strength.** Missionaries must have a high degree of strength – this will serve them well in the struggles they encounter. Without strength of character it is easy to succumb to melancholy. Virtue should not be easily upset by cold, heat or discomfort. If you do not possess strength of character here you will not find it in the missions. Sometimes the smallest problem, something really trivial, can stifle our ability to do good and we drown in a sea of troubles. We must overcome those trifles and setbacks before they become serious. I do not want you to fantasize about future crosses like those who say “Oh, I will do this and I will do that ...” and then they do nothing. It’s a bad thing for a community to fall into a rut; we must shake ourselves up and work with enthusiasm. Holy missionaries are not wishy-washy. The goal of our Congregation is to form heroic missionaries! There is no greater unhappiness than to live in community without enthusiasm. The Lord does not bless laziness. We should not drag ourselves lifelessly along the road to holiness – but rather move forward by pushing ourselves!

Our greatest mistake is to think we have given ourselves totally to the Lord. We are virtuous as long as we are not put to the test – but at the slightest setback our holiness evaporates. Each of us must be willing to affirm: whatever the cost I will respond totally to God – not my will but His be done! I have already mentioned St. Francis de Sales’ words: “If I discovered a single thread in my heart that did not belong to the Lord I would rip it out mercilessly!” How many such threads are there in our hearts? The threads of pride, gluttony, jealousy, uncharitableness. We must strive to eliminate all these shortcomings. Energy, enthusiasm is a gift the Lord gives to those He loves. Don’t lose courage.

**129. Constancy.** There must be stability in missionary work. A small good work carried through to completion is worth more than grandiose projects left half finished. Constancy is a missionary’s endowment. St. Paul urges us to run the race and reach the finish line (Cf. I Corinthians 9,24). Sometimes we spend one day running and then we grow tired and slow down. We must be even tempered. One day running and the next doing nothing – this is not good enough. When we know something should be done we must carry it through to completion. We must know how to exercise self-control and be always even-tempered.

We can apply the parable of the mustard seed (Cf. Matthew 13,31-35) to those little things we do in community that are valuable in God’s eyes because they are done for love of Him. We must be constant in doing these small tasks – not do them one day and then omit them the next. We are ready to do the big things but grow easily bored with small daily tasks. Today we do everything we should ... perfect obedience ... heartfelt charity ... but then tomorrow ... we are not constant! But this is precisely what constitutes holiness – to do the little things well and always. Cardinal Gaetano Bisleti was a fan of Cafasso and used to say: “I have never seen a saint like him.” The heroism of his virtue consisted in constancy. Heroism was not found in miracles but in his ongoing commitment – he was always there ready to do good and not waste time. Many want to become saints but those who want it constantly, every single day, are few. Remember, holiness requires constancy and determination. Whoever wants to become a saint must correspond to God’s grace day by day, hour by hour, from morning to evening and never give in to moodiness or whim. We must serve the Lord with ongoing and enthusiastic fidelity. A genuine missionary must have spirit, determination, unflinching constancy and an even temper.

**Love like a family**

**130. A big heart.** Love of God and love of our neighbor are so closely connected that we could call them a single love. Love of our neighbor must be supernatural – that is it must come from God and return to Him. Whoever loves his neighbor loves him in God and through God. It follows that whoever loves God must necessarily love his neighbor. We do not genuinely love our neighbor if we do so only because we like him, we hope to get something from him or there is some passion involved. Love of neighbor is a commandment the Lord refers to as “His own” and “new”: “This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you” (John 15,12). “I am giving you a new commandment: that you love one another as I have loved you so you must love each other” (John 13,34).

St. Gregory the Great says that if we do not love our neighbor we should not proclaim the Gospel. St. Laurence Giustiniani agrees saying evangelization is essentially an act of charity and how can one communicate the fire if one does not have it? Missionaries must have a big heart overflowing with compassion for their brethren. Were they not led to become missionaries out of the desire to do good for their neighbors and save souls?

For a priest especially – everything reinforces this love of neighbor: at the altar he, like the sacrificial victim, offers himself to the Lord for the remission of his sins and the sins of the people; the sacrament of reconciliation where he exercises charity, patience and compassion; this holds true for all of his services. The priest and more especially the missionary is the man of charity.

“Charity thinks no evil” (I Corinthians 13,5). I am not talking about those fleeting thoughts or judgments that pass through our mind and which we forget or ignore. I am referring to voluntary and consensual rash judgments. We ignore our neighbor’s many good qualities and focus on his small defects. Not infrequently we judge his intentions – something only God can do. “Man looks at appearances and God sees the heart” (I Samuel 16,7). Even when we see something that is clearly wrong we must excuse the intention involved - ignorance or inadvertence. Our Lord has warned us: “Judge not lest you be judged, condemn not and you will not be condemned” (Luke 6,27). In the Imitation of Christ we read: “Look at yourself and do not rush to judge the actions of others.” St. Francis de Sales tells us “If an action has a hundred interpretations look at the best one.” How often we see the speck in our brother’s eye and ignore the beam in our own. “The measure with which you measure unto others will be measured out to you” (Luke 6,38).

Above all do not grumble about your neighbor. It is easy enough to speak ill of others but repairing the damage done is not so easy. We will never regret not having spoken less; we will always regret having said too much. There are so many good things we can say without including bad things. We can always give good advice, a word of comfort or encouragement and above all good example and prayer.

Sometimes we repeat things we have heard inaccurately and this can cause problems. This can happen so easily! Often this occurs without any malice on our part but it is a fact that what we have said is not accurate – we either say something that is not true or we exaggerate. How much damage can occur in a community if one or two tell inaccurate stories. Our speech should be prudent. Not everything that is true need be said. Above all our conversations should be charitable: it is so very easy to be uncharitable when speaking about others.

**131. Love each other like brothers and sisters.** To speak about charity amongst ourselves seems almost offensive. And yet Our Lord so often repeated his command of fraternal charity. St. John did little else but recommend mutual charity – so much so that he was called the Apostle of Charity. In the last years of his life he repeated over and over “My sons, love each other.” And when his followers complained about hearing the same thing over and over again he would say: “This is the Lord’s command – if you do this you are doing everything.” Speaking about this St. John Chrysostom commented: “A brief sentence but it is great and conclusive!” I, like St. John, will continue to repeat the same thing hoping you will remember it when you are in the missions.

Especially towards the end of their lives the founders of religious congregations urged their sons and daughters to practice mutual charity. I will do the same thing: these are my last words to missionaries leaving for the missions. If they came here to ask “Is there charity?” We would answer, “Yes, perfect charity.” One day I put this question to the superior of our sisters. She almost seemed offended ... but I am a skeptical man, always doubting. I want to be able to say: “Many other virtues may be lacking but there is charity.” I will send down lightning from heaven if I see that you are not being charitable.

There are always problems when people live in community but we must be careful not to break the spell of charity. We must not deceive ourselves: if we do not have charity here we will not have it in the missions. If we do not cultivate genuine and perfect charity now our witness later will be counterproductive. I want to see charity flourishing. We cannot love our far-off neighbors if we do not have charity for those we see every day here and now. Unless we are rooted in fraternal charity we will encounter problems we cannot handle and will ask for a new assignment or that one or another of our colleagues to be transferred. This should never be the case! We must change ourselves and remain on the job. We must examine ourselves closely on the subject of our fraternal charity here and now among our present companions and not on the charity we will practice in some future situation with as yet unmet colleagues.

A parish priest once went to Don Cafasso to ask for an assistant – but he wanted a specific type of assistant. Cafasso listened to all the good qualities the priest wanted his assistant to possess and then said to him: “Listen, my dear Pastor, just outside the residence here there is a maker of statues in the square. Go there and have him make you an assistant that fits your specifications.” What about us? We must take people as they are. Because someone has shortcomings does this mean he should be transferred? If a missionary were willing to do only and always what pleased him how could he possibly get along with his co-workers? We must have patience and the ability to overlook certain things; we must see if our charity is the sort described by St. Paul – is it without ambition, not seeking its own way, etc. I do not want there to be even a trace of uncharitableness amongst us. We must love everyone equally and be willing to give our lives for our brothers and sisters.

The first Christians were of one heart and mind. When they shared the possessions they brought to the apostles they did not give a fixed amount to each but to each according to his need. Acting in this fashion guaranteed equality. Absolute equality would have been a mistake.

**132. Signs of fraternal charity.** There are four signs that determine if we have genuine fraternal charity: to rejoice at others’ joys and good fortune; to suffer with those who suffer; to correct our defects out of love for others and put up with the shortcomings of others; forgive offences and be kind to those who have offended us.

“Be happy with those who are joyful” (Romans 12,15). Do we do this? Do we rejoice at the good fortune of our brothers and sisters? Yes, if the good fortune of others prompts us to say “Whether it is me or them does not matter as long as God is served.” It can be difficult to feel real joy when someone else succeeds in some endeavor. Envy makes it difficult to take pleasure in someone else’s success as if it were our own. It is difficult to share someone else’s joy. We must rejoice at the good fortune of our brothers and sisters; we must be pleased if someone in our congregation is more learned or holier than we are. We should never utter words that detract from another’s reputation nor should we be among those who never say an admiring word of others. Let it be understood, I’m not saying we should flatter the successful but a word of congratulation or sharing in their happiness is not out of place.

“Weep with those who are weeping” (Romans 12,15). We should not intrude upon their grief but should share in it respectfully: a prayer, a favor, etc. There are so many little gestures that are not showy but can comfort or console a brother or sister in pain. If our finger hurts our whole body is in pain – this is how it should be in our community. If we see a brother or sister suffering we should

come immediately to his assistance. We should be willing to sit up all night with a sick brother or sister. If a confrère's parent dies we should feel the grief he is enduring. How ugly it is when we do not share others' suffering. Is it not often the case that a word of cheer can break the spell of melancholy or difficulty?

"Bear each other's burdens" (Galatians 6,2). Strive to eliminate the shortcomings that bother our neighbors. These are the first defects we must work on; they may derive from our personality or our way of speaking and acting. At the same time we must bear with the defects of others. We must try to correct these defects fraternally or otherwise learn to bear with them patiently. Who is without defects? Charity puts up with everything: the insensitivity of one, the contrariness of another, the comfortableness of those who cause us discomfort, etc. A little charity can adjust and even things out. Without charity common life would be unbearable. We are like so many fragile vessels placed side by side that annoy one another. The Imitation of Christ puts it well: "If you want to keep peace and harmony with all your brothers you must practice self-control in so many things." We must bear patiently with the shortcomings of others whether they are physical, moral or intellectual. If we do not become accustomed to putting up with each other we will find ourselves moving from one assignment to another in the missions. It's painful to think a missionary who has made so many sacrifices – leaving home and family, bearing with criticism and mockery – is unable to bear with his or her co-workers!

"Be ye angry and sin not; do not let the sun set on your anger" (Ephesians 4,26). Talking about forgiving offences to missionaries may seem absurd since we repeat so many times each day "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" (Matthew 6,12). We must forgive all the small offences that deliberately or otherwise occur. If we cannot excuse ourselves (sometimes it is not even necessary) we must approach and speak with the person concerned. What a dreadful thing it is when two people are not speaking to each other. How can we preach forgiveness of our enemies if we do not provide the example. We may think this does not apply to us. It applies to all of us. Never let evening fall before all is made up. Do you know what the Gospel says about this? "If therefore you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave there your gift before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5,23-24). The Gospel does not say "if you have wronged your brother" but rather "if your brother has something against you go and be reconciled with him." Who is holy that he does not on occasion say something that might be offensive? These are things the Lord allows for the sake of our humility. Why then should we be offended? Why should we be resentful? We must have a big heart. Did Our Lord not provide us with a wondrous example by asking His Father to forgive the men who were crucifying Him. And are we incapable of forgiving the small things that offend us?

In a circular letter I sent to missionaries in Africa I wrote that even saints can have differences of opinions and on occasion they can defend these differences somewhat aggressively. I quoted St. Paul, "Do not let the sun set on your anger" (Ephesians 4,26). Whether we are right or wrong we must reconcile immediately. Do not wait a day, an hour or even five minutes – reconcile immediately. Then people will say "look how the missionaries love each other." And this love will spread to others. One sign that we have really forgiven an offence is to pray for and wish well to whoever may have offended us. Again let us listen to St. Paul: "Love one another with brotherly love" (Romans 12,10). We must really love each other with brotherly love. I can only hope that you will never forget these words of mine.

**133. "Esprit de corps".** The Apostle Paul explains why Christians should preserve their unity: "There is but one body, one spirit and you were called in the one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all" (Ephesians 4,4-6). What St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians is even more applicable to us who form a moral body; through our religious, priestly and missionary vocation we form a spiritual union. This union is necessary for all of us if we are to have

genuine peace in the community. How often I have spoken of this! St. Paul never tired of urging Christians to be united and neither shall I let up saying something that is for the good of each and all of us. This unity is something beautiful and holy – one might call it the community's greatest possession.

For true charity there must be unity – a unity that embraces everyone. One for all and all for one. I repeat: this is absolutely necessary in a community. Where this unity does not exist there is only ruin. Whatever the cost we must do all we can to create this unity. We form a single moral body and there ought to exist amongst us the same unity that prevails among the members of a physical body. This unity is necessary if we are to be strong and live in peace. Unity makes us strong. Unity turns us into a strong and well-equipped army (Cf. Canticle 6.5) capable of overcoming all enemies and obstacles. Disunity, on the other hand, destroys community.

Every congregation has its own particular purpose which requires the cooperation of all to achieve it. In this fashion are working the members of well organized congregations who, without thinking they are superior to others, prefer their own and strive to improve it constantly. We may think of ourselves as lowly, the most recently arrived on the scene but at the same time we are happy to belong to our congregation and we cultivate the notion that the Lord has blessed us by calling us to this family. We must love our community as we love our vocation. In this way we will establish a like-mindedness that leads us forward in unity. A community in which this unity exists cannot fail to do good. Therefore strive to achieve and maintain it. Unity is the essence of charity.

**134. Family spirit.** St. Peter wrote: “Above all preserve great charity amongst you” (I Peter 4,8). Charity is the defining characteristic of the true disciples of Our Lord Jesus Christ. We know what was said about the early Christians: “Look how they love one another.” I know that we practice brotherly love but still we must be watchful and examine ourselves often to see if our charity is total. We may at times be charitable but not with everyone and not in every situation. At times we follow our own instincts and forge ahead paying no attention to others; at times we are selfish. Others are afraid to approach us, afraid of how we will react. This is not good; this does not constitute a family spirit. None of us should ever say: what do I care? We should care – all of us – if we are to become holy and learned missionaries.

Our charity must not be just spiritual, it must be material charity. We must help each other, share our burdens and lend a hand when there is work to be done. How beautiful it is when the members a community compete in helping each other. That is genuine charity. Is not this how things are done in a family? We must have the same practical love brothers and sisters exhibit: we must treat each other with kindness and do those little things affection dictates. We are not statues with no connection to each other. Each of us must feel and be interested in the good of the community; we must be vital and likeminded members. I want there to be – and there ought to be – brotherly love. I want each of us to do good too and rejoice and suffer with our brothers and sisters. We must help each other in every way we can. We must practice the kindness, helpfulness and affection of those who really love one another. Remember our Congregation is not a school or a seminary – it is a family. We are all brothers; we must live together, prepare together and then work together all our life long. In our Congregation our unity must be such that we are willing to lay down our lives for one another. “No man has greater love than this – to lay down his life for his friends” (John 15,13). We must love each other as brothers: if one suffers we all suffer; what is good for one is good for all of us. If all of us in the community tried to please each other what an ideal community it would be! “Behold how good and sweet it is for brothers to live together” (Psalm 132,1). How beautiful it is when we are all together – not like statues in a museum or prisoners in jail but like brothers and sisters in the same house – one big family!

**135. Fraternal Promotion.**<sup>2</sup> “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently” (Galatians 6,1). Fraternal promotion is an aspect of family spirit. We should be happy if others correct us and we should return this act of charity to them. Sometimes our shortcomings are apparent to everyone except ourselves. How helpful a word from a brother or sister would be! And yet we find this kind of charity difficult. We should not judge but when a fault is evident we should correct it. Is this not an obligation of charity?

Fraternal promotion must be done well, with discretion, in the appropriate way and at the right time – but it should be done. It should always be prompted by charity and charity must be done well. Do not be confrontational. We must be charitable with each other and then our community will be a community of spirit. “But,” you may object “doesn’t this contradict what you have said so many times – that we must put up with one another?” No, on the contrary. We must imitate the virtues and correct the defects with holy liberty. The one being corrected should accept the correction as if it came from God. If we want to create a sensitive and fraternal community we must help each other to overcome our shortcomings with sensitivity and charity.

### **Love of the Cross and a spirit of sacrifice**

**136. Especially as missionaries.** Near the end of His earthly life Jesus said to His Apostles: “We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be turned over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him.” The Gospel continues: “The disciples did not understand any of this” and then as if it was still not clear the Gospel says: “Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about” (Luke 18,31-34). This is a lesson for us: after so many hours spent meditating on the passion of Our Lord and our duty to follow Him to Calvary we still have not understood this spirit in practice. We must love and embrace sacrifice as sinners, as Christians and even more so as missionaries.

Ask the Lord for a love of suffering. Speaking about St. Paul, Our Lord said to Ananias: “I will show him how much he must suffer for my name” (Acts 9,16). The Lord did not say that He would reveal sweetness and consolation but rather suffering. He did the same thing with the Apostles: He predicted what they would have to suffer for love of Him. This is how it will be for us. Therefore we must begin now to accustom ourselves to little setbacks so that we will be generous when even greater sufferings come. We must ask the Lord for the light and grace to understand His suffering as well as the strength to endure our own suffering. Without a spirit of sacrifice we will never be holy missionaries. When we first thought of becoming a missionary we may have even thought of martyrdom. But that was a fantasy – in reality we bristle before even little sacrifices. We must struggle against ourselves and against our nature which abhors suffering. We must conquer ourselves! We cannot expect the Lord to make us saints without our cooperation.

The Lord has given us an example of suffering in His body and His soul. The Letter to the Hebrews tells us this: “who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame” (Hebrews 12,2). All the saints followed in the footsteps of the Lord. St. Paul says, “Be imitators of me as I am of Christ” (I Corinthians 11,1). How many great physical and moral sufferings the great apostle endured! Bodily suffering: flogging, stoning, shipwreck; internal suffering in his ministry as he said “Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches” (II Corinthians 11,28). The apostle’s example is a reproof to us and our scant tolerance of hardship, our quick discouragement in the apostolate especially when we do not see any response.

We must love the Cross – but not just poetically. It is easy to long for suffering when we are not actually enduring it – it is only when we are really in pain that we must demonstrate our strength.

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<sup>2</sup> Allamano frequently used the expression “fraternal correction”. In these pages we have preferred the expression “fraternal promotion” which more closely reflects the language of current psychology. The content of what Allamano had to say about this practice however remains unchanged.

To love the Cross is perfection but we must begin by learning to carry it.

We must all be convinced of the need for sacrifice if we are to be true disciples of Our Lord. Never forget that you are apostles and that souls are saved through sacrifice. There will be roses in the life of an apostle – but there will also be thorns, both physical and spiritual thorns. We may imagine ourselves ideal missionaries (all poetry) but we must never forget that souls are saved through and from the Cross: this is what Jesus did. God's grace will never fail us and if we are generous in bearing the trials the Lord sends us we will be able to say with St. Paul: "I am greatly encouraged; in all our troubles my joy knows no bounds" (II Corinthians 7,4). Troubles should not stop us in our tracks, on the contrary they should prompt us to act like apostles.

We must learn the true spirit of sacrifice, even spiritual sacrifice. We must love suffering and learn how to suffer without letting everyone know about it. I want you to be strong! Then the Lord will bless us. One missionary with good will and a spirit of sacrifice can do the work of many. We must live a life of sacrifice from sunrise to sunset. True, to do everything for love of God, to surrender our own will and judgment, to carry our cross daily – this is a slow and prolonged martyrdom. A bloody martyrdom is probably more showy but this slow martyrdom is more valuable.

**137. Mortification is not old fashioned.** A missionary who has not acquired the habit and spirit of mortification can accomplish nothing. St. Paul tells us "Every athlete goes through training" (I Corinthians 9,25). In our day no one wants to talk about external, bodily mortification. We think it is good enough to mortify the spirit and that bodily mortification is not appropriate for our weaker constitutions – it is something only hermits should practice. You should not think like this.

Should we mortify our spirit? Certainly – no one denies this. Spiritual mortification is of primary importance. But spiritual mortification should be accompanied by bodily mortification. There are so many forms of bodily mortification that do no harm to our health – some even confer physical benefits. Should only hermits engage in physical mortification? No, even today there are so many people eager to be saints who fast, keep vigils and do penance.

External mortification is as necessary as internal mortifications. The Word of God and the example of the saints tell us this. The Lord Jesus fasted for forty days (Cf. Matthew 4,1-11). St. Paul chastised his body to gain mastery over it (Cf. I Corinthians 9,25). St. Vincent de Paul used to say: "Anyone who discounts external mortification practices neither internal nor external mortification." Remember this, especially when you are in the missions. We must pray and practice mortification to obtain grace. I will always talk about internal mortification but never forget that external mortification is equally important.

**138. The little sacrifices no one sees.** I do not expect you to perform the great penances the saints practiced – although this would not be a bad thing. You can however make the little, daily sacrifices that make it possible to face up to the greater, more heroic sacrifices your later apostolic life may require. Unless you learn to practice self-control and virtue you will never be strong. If you want to sacrifice yourself you must pay attention to details. The Lord wants you to make small but continual sacrifices. Starting now you must mortify your senses: sight – do not seek to see everything even what is legitimate; hearing – do not be curious and try to hear everything; taste – eat with moderation and be satisfied with what the community provides; touch – respect your body which has been made holy by baptism, confirmation and the many communions you have received. You must get up quickly in the morning. This may seem unimportant but I believe being quick to rise we will foster a good spirit. It is such an ugly thing to start the day with laziness. The Lord wants this morning sacrifice – it will bring blessings down upon the whole day. If you do these things now you will be more generous in the missions. The greatest obstacle to becoming saints is a lack of constancy in making these sacrifices.

We must especially mortify our tongue. There is a time to speak and a time to keep silence. In his



oh so beautiful epistle St. James speaks at length about the good and evil one can do with the tongue. It is a small member, he writes, but boasts of so many things. With our tongue we can speak well and edify others; we can pray and sing the praise of the Lord. We can also use our tongue to say vane things – useless and inappropriate words. We can offend charity with criticism, grumbling and calumny. We can speak untruthfully, exaggerate, boast or show off, etc. (Cf. James 3,5). Do you think Jesus would say these things? How thoughtless and offensive are the words of one who cannot control his tongue and this vice is widespread. Who can calculate the damage or offense caused by a thoughtless word – especially when this word belittles the honor or reputation of our neighbor? It is so very easy to sin with the tongue! St. James writes: “If anyone is never at fault with what he says, he is a perfect man” (James 3,2). Ben Sirach says: “Blessed is the man who does not sin with his tongue” (Sirach 25,8).

You might think, “It is better to be silent and never speak again!” If you were to remain here, within these walls, I might agree with you. But you are neither Carthusians nor Trappists. You cannot remain forever silent – but you must think before you speak. St. Ambrose asked himself: “Maybe it would be better to remain forever mute” but then he answered “No.” A rule of thumb might be: either keep silent or say things that are better than silence. St. Francis de Sales develops this thought: “Our speech should be infrequent and good, infrequent and sweet, infrequent and simple, infrequent and charitable, infrequent and agreeable.” We must speak with moderation, prudence, charity and piety.

## **Patience**

**139. Indispensable in mission.** Patience is a great virtue all must practice but it is absolutely indispensable for missionaries. Speaking of the virtues an apostle must exhibit St. Paul patience coupled with strength in first place. “Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger” (II Corinthians 6,4-5). The necessity and importance of patience is evident. Experience teaches us that the extent of a missionary’s patience will have a direct bearing on the conversion of souls. We can never be patient enough. We all need this virtue because we must practice it at all times.

The excellence of this virtue is apparent from the Word of God. During His passion the Lord showed the greatest patience and endured every sort of suffering; he displayed the greatest gentleness with Judas, with those who flogged Him and with those who crucified Him. St. James writes that we must have patience if we are to achieve perfection: “Patience must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1,4). St. Cyprian who was himself a strong spirit speaks well of patience: “Patience makes us dear to God, it controls our anger, bridles our tongue, rules our mind, keeps the peace, orders discipline, blocks the onrush of lust ...” He goes on to praise this virtue in the most extravagant way. Patience is the underpinning of all the other virtues – without patience they would fail.

Patience is the virtue that moderates our sadness at misfortune; it controls our impulses; it withstands adversity and keeps us even-tempered; it helps us bear hardship with serenity. We will encounter two types of misfortune in this life: internal and external. External misfortunes would be: loss of property or relatives, malice directed at us, disrespect, illness or some other sort of discomfort. The internal misfortunes are: boredom, interior darkness, spiritual aridity, disgust, scruples. All of these phenomena sadden the heart and require patience to be endured. The Lord suffered these things in Gethsemane but He did not lose courage. We must learn how to endure these trials without being overwhelmed by sadness. A glance at the crucifix can put everything in perspective.

**140. Ongoing effort.** There are degrees in the practice of patience. Those who endure bad things

without rebelling practice the first degree; they may complain or seek consolation and comfort in their moment of need. This is virtuous if we bear with our trials out of love of God – but it is the least we can do. Those who endure everything, resign themselves to the will of God and neither complain nor seek comfort are practicing the second degree of patience. Those who accept trials not just with resignation but with joy are practicing the third degree of patience. They so love God that they almost do not feel the discomfort. This was the case with the martyrs – they so wanted to become one with Jesus Crucified that they overcame pain.

This is the degree of patience Jesus proposes and for which we must strive. We do not so much enjoy the bad things that happen as relish the chance to become more like the Suffering Jesus – to cooperate more effectively in saving souls. The apostles were beaten and dragged before tribunals for the love and name of Jesus – but they were happy to experience this (Cf. Acts 5,41) as was St. Paul. His only boast was in the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Cf. Galatians 6.14). St. Peter urged Christians “But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed” (I Peter 4,13).

We must begin with at least the second degree of patience: we must not complain nor want people to feel sorry for us. This should be the case whether our sufferings are physical, moral or spiritual. Things will never go the way we want them to. We will always have some problem or suffering to endure. We must, therefore, forearm ourselves with patience and be committed to achieving the third degree of that virtue – that is accepting joyfully whatever setbacks we encounter. Without patience we will never have peace of mind, peace in the community or peace in the world.

There are many ways to achieve patience: we can ask the Lord for this virtue in prayer; we can overcome the little problems we encounter so that when really serious setbacks occur we meet them with courage. God allows these problems to arise – they are not the product of human malice. We must accept these crosses not just as coming from the Lord but sent because He loves us. When we are being tried we must look at the crucifix – this explains everything. Make frequent acts of surrender to God’s will and think of heaven.

You must exercise patience during your time of formation if you hope to have it later during your life in the missions. Sometimes our patience is so short! We are like glass – the slightest blow and we break. We must show ourselves superior to this weakness; we must be energetic in our efforts to overcome impatience. We must be patient in everything. If a missionary allows himself to be discouraged, if he does not react against sadness, what will he accomplish in mission? When we encounter some slight suffering it is a sign that the Lord loves us. We can never understand the mystery of tribulation clearly enough! Let us commit ourselves to the practice of this virtue. In this way we will achieve peace with ourselves and with others.

## **Humility**

**141. Jesus was the only truly humble one.** The Lord Jesus declared, “Learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart” (Matthew 11,9). St. Augustine notes that He does not urge us to imitate Him as creator of the world, creator of all that is seen and unseen, worker of miracles, one who raises the dead – but as one who is meek and humble of heart. This is how He wants us to imitate Him. If He had asked us to imitate His extreme poverty or His total self-sacrifice – even to death on the cross – we could have pled that we were too weak. To imitate His humility is something everyone can achieve since this is natural to our human condition whereas for Jesus it was an “annihilation.” He was the only genuinely humble one. For this reason the Fathers called humility the “virtue of Christ.”

If we peruse the Gospel we discover that Jesus’ whole life is an example of humility. Jesus declared that His teaching was not His own but His Father’s: “My teaching is not my own but His who sent me” (John 7,16). When one addressed Him as good Master he replied, “No one is good – but God alone” (Mark 10,18). Had not the Father said of Him: “This is my beloved son in whom I am well

pleased” (Matthew 3,17). Even though He was the Lord of the universe He did not hesitate to serve the Apostles – even to wash their feet. The greatest miracle of humility was His death with all the ignominy that accompanied it and which He fully accepted. “He humbled Himself becoming obedient unto death, even to death on the cross” (Philippians 2,8).

Jesus became humble of His own free will. Even though He could have avoided humiliation He accepted it. As was written about Him: “ill-treated he allowed himself to be humiliated and did not open his mouth” (Isaiah 53,7). He was not humiliated – He allowed Himself to be humiliated: “He humbled Himself” (Philippians 2,8).

**142. Humble perforce.** We are humble because it is our nature to be so – we are weak and defective. To be humble in words is no great accomplishment; we can do this and still retain a subtle pride. It is more difficulty to remain humble when we are being showered with praise. Out of prudence we are reluctant to reveal our real selves but in our heart we relish human glory although we feign nonchalance when we receive praise we have earned. This is not how Jesus was humble – He had a genuine love of humility.

Why do we talk so much about humility? Here is why: no other virtue no matter how splendid is solid unless it is accompanied by humility. St. Augustine was asked what was the first virtue and answered: “The first virtue is humility and the second is humility and the third is humility.” St. Jerome called it the virtue of Christians precisely because it is involved in every other virtue. Without humility even good things go bad.

To pray well we must have humility. Only the prayers of the humble reach heaven; the prayers of the proud do not, e.g. the Pharisee (Cf. Luke 18,10-14). The Lord takes into account the humility of a prayer. So too without humility there is no faith. How can a proud person submit his intelligence and reason to the authority of the Church? The proud person does not believe. Without humility there is no hope. How can we leave everything in God’s hands when we only trust ourselves. And what can we say about charity? The proud man loves himself and not the Lord. St. Augustine tells us “Where there is humility there is charity.” And the opposite of this is also true: where there is no humility there is no charity.

**143. To serve with humility.** Our status as missionaries is one of service – hence humility is absolutely necessary. Servants must be humble. Jesus said to His disciples: “The greatest among you will become the smallest, and the one who rules will be the one who serves” (Luke 22,26). Ben Sirach teaches us: “The greater you are the more humble you will be made” (Sirach 3,18). This is how Our Lady acted when she responded to the Angel’s message that she would become the Mother of God: “Behold the handmaiden of the Lord!” (Luke 1,38). St. Isidore calls our ministry a “ministry of humility.”

The virtue of humility is so very necessary for missionaries that without it they can accomplish nothing worthwhile. Do you want to become saints – you ought to – become as holy as possible? Commit yourselves to humility. Humility will help you practice all the other virtues. If anyone should be humble – it is certainly us.

Consolata Men and Women Missionaries must live with a vital spirit of faith, sacrifice, fraternal charity but above all deepest humility. We must convince ourselves of the need for this virtue; we should not fear humbling ourselves too much. If we are humble – collectively as a Congregation as well – the Lord will raise us up. I want our motto to be: “I shall protect him because he acknowledges my name” (Cf. Psalm 90,14).

**144. Humility is truth.** Humility involves a genuine understanding of ourselves. We know ourselves as we really are. This does not mean that humility requires that we think ourselves worse

than we really are – no humility is a virtue and as such is based on truth not falsehood. Humility does not mean we go around saying “I’m good for nothing!” Often we say things like this while fishing for compliments. Some think it is humility to disdain their successes. No – virtue is always linked to truth. When we do something we do it as best we can. We should perhaps be slow to claim many talents but if we genuinely are gifted we should recognize this; all talents come from God and all success is His. Humility should be simple; do not do foolish things to avoid praise. Humility must be based on a genuine and appropriate understanding of our condition and our talents – both in the natural and supernatural order.

Let us look at ourselves. Naturally speaking what are we? Ashes and dust. What do we have that is really our own? Just as God gave us existence and keeps us alive so too all our gifts and talents come from Him. Therefore our body, soul, health, good looks and intelligence all come from God. “What do you possess that you have not been given? And if it has been given to you why do you boast about it as if you had not received it?” (II Corinthians 4,7). These same considerations are both true and valid and can be applied to the supernatural order. If we are Christians it is through God’s grace. We have been called to this house through no merit of our own. Rather the Lord has led us here. Good will itself is a gift of God. In the supernatural order everything comes from God. This helps us understand how the saints – even though they worked miracles – could remain humble. St. Paul says: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners— of whom I am the worst” (I Timothy 1,15). If we are to know, understand and be happy with ourselves as we really are we must ask God for humility every day.

**145. Humility is not infused.** Humility is not ordinarily given to us we must work for it. We acquire this virtue through repeated acts. Every time prideful thoughts pass through our mind we must repeat over and over: “God alone, God alone!” These interior acts will help us but are not enough. We need external acts, manifestations of our internal humility, as well. St. Thomas teaches us that interior humility will produce external signs, words and gestures. We should not boast nor should we belittle ourselves. When we are reprimanded or corrected we should control ourselves and not make excuses. We should do nothing to attract the attention of others, we should do nothing that feeds our pride. Above all we should accept willingly those humiliations the Lord sends our way. In this way we will be genuinely humble and it is only if we are humble that we will become saints.

To acquire a spirit of humility we must not be too attached to ourselves, to our opinions, knowledge, talents or the respect of others – all of these things can lead to pride. If we can convince ourselves that our heads are small, our intelligence limited and our ideas frequently wrong we can more easily accept the opinions of those who may be more experienced than we are. Remember, ask God for humility; be mindful of our own weakness and accept the humiliations God sends us.

As Sirach suggests we should be careful with our good name: “Take care of your name” (Sirach 41,12); or as Jesus said: “Let your light shine before men so that they see your good works and give praise to your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5,16). However we must always work for supernatural goals and not to win the respect of others or advance our career – rather our goal must be to please God. Sometimes our self-absorption deceives us and we see the glory of God or the good of souls where there is really nothing else but our own advantage. Titles, positions, etc. all of these things are bagatelles – they are worth nothing. The Lord does not pay attention to titles.

I have been a superior for forty years now and it’s about time that I brought this to an end. I would be more than willing to leave the Consolata Sanctuary, the Ecclesiastical Residence, the Chapter of Canons ... I don’t mean leave you but ... For this reason I would like to repeat something I have said in the past. You kiss my hand and I have always let you do this but not any longer. I know that you love me but this is too much. Let’s stop this – you can kiss my hand when I am dead if you like. I am grateful for these demonstrations of respect but I do not want you to exaggerate. Moreover I no longer want to see myself referred to as “the very venerable.” I counted at least eight such

references in the pages of Da Casa Madre – this is too much. If Cafasso is just a venerable should I be a “very venerable?” Only the Lord knows if I merit such distinction ... don’t use this expression any more; I think it is an exaggeration. Let us imitate Our Lady and claim only our weaknesses – the honor and glory belongs to God (Cf. Luke 1,47-48).

## 8 The Eucharist: a mystery of faith and love<sup>1</sup>

### Jesus the Victim

**146. Celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice.** In the Eucharist Jesus is victim, food and friend. Our three loves are: Mass, Communion and Visits to the Blessed Sacrament. I would like you to meditate more intensely on this mystery of love. The Eucharist is indeed a mystery of faith and a ministry of love!

In the celebration of the Holy Mass Jesus becomes a victim for us and for our sins (Cf. I John 2,2). Every day and several times a day He sacrifices Himself for us. Mass does not just represent the sacrifice of the Cross – it renews it: the same victim and the same purpose. The way in which the sacrifice is accomplished may differ. On Calvary the sacrifice was bloody but the Mass does not. It is beautiful to think that each time we celebrate or participate in the Mass we are once again on Calvary at the foot of the Cross with Our Lady and St. John. Jesus said: “Do this in memory of me” (Luke 22,19) and St. Thomas defined the Eucharistic Celebration as a memorial of the Passion of the Lord. St. Paul says the same thing: “Each time you eat this bread or drink this cup you announce the death of the Lord until He comes again” (I Corinthians 11,26). Compared to the Mass martyrdom itself is not much because martyrdom is the sacrifice a man makes to God of his own life whereas in the Mass the Son of God sacrifices His own body and blood for mankind.

By celebrating the Eucharist we render God the honor He is due; we ask pardon for our offences; we thank Him for the gifts He has given us and we seek the grace we need.

**147. The most beautiful moment of our life.** Certainly it is evident how important Mass is. But what respect do we show it? What happiness do we experience when we celebrate or participate in it? Mass is the most beautiful moment of our lives. One Mass alone would make whoever celebrates it happy. If we had to prepare for fifteen or twenty years for one celebration – how happy we would be! It is its own reward. Oh how happy we are to celebrate the Eucharist. At times like Christmas we can celebrate Mass three times – what a delight. One is preparation for the next – what joy! If we only understood what one more Mass means.

The priest who celebrates the Eucharist must offer himself in a pure and holy oblation with all his strength and enthusiasm. At every Mass we commemorate the sacrifice Jesus made of Himself to the Father we must ask to sacrifice ourselves with Him. You must be burnt-offerings – yes, burnt-offerings.

Each time a priest celebrates or participates in Mass it must be an extraordinary, new and joyful event as the day the Lord Jesus came down in the womb of the Virgin and became man. Prepare yourselves well to celebrate the Eucharist; be holy and practice virtue with a vital spirit of faith. When you celebrate Mass think of what you are saying and what you are doing. If everything you do is worth doing well how much more the celebration of Mass. I always tell new priest you will celebrate Mass every day but do not rush it. I have extracted ideas from St. Alphonsus’s pamphlet “La Messa Strapazzata” and synthesized them into thirty meditations – one for each day of the month. I read one every morning and I find it helpful in preparing for Mass. After Mass we must make a decent thanksgiving.

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<sup>1</sup> As is apparent from various of his insights and statements Allamano’s concept of the Eucharist was typical of the spirituality of his era. It focused on affection and the “real presence” of Jesus. The Post-Council renewal has shifted emphasis to the unity of the Eucharist: the celebration of the Mass, Communion and the Real Presence are inseparable. In the Mass, the proclamation of the Word and the community gathered around the altar have received greater emphasis. Allamano was certainly aware of these elements but he usually spoke of them in other contexts. In these pages we present his teaching with only slight changes in language. For example instead of “say Mass” we use “celebrate Mass” and instead of “assist at Mass” we have “celebrate or participate in Mass.” In spite of his terminology Allamano was convinced of the need for active engagement in the Eucharistic celebration.

After so many years of priesthood I am happy to confess that I do not remember ever celebrating the Mass poorly; I say this without vanity – but with holy pride. I have always done ceremonies well and I find this comforting. In spite of my many problems but I have always striven to celebrate Mass well. When I genuflect I go right down to the floor – in spite of my age.

What I said about the priest who celebrates Mass is equally valid for all those who participate in the celebration. This is the greatest of devotions. We must admire and commit ourselves to understanding the great mystery we celebrate. St. Alphonsus wrote: “So many make long journeys to visit this or that sanctuary – for me the greatest of all sanctuaries is the tabernacle.” He was speaking about visits to the Blessed Sacrament; the same thing could be said and even more appropriately about the Eucharistic celebration. The Mass reassumes all our private prayers because it is not we who pray but Jesus who prays for us.

How should we participate in the celebration of Mass? First of all by renewing our faith: we must have a vital faith and an ardent charity as if we were standing on Calvary itself. We must bear in mind that this is a renewal of the sacrifice of the Cross and we must pray that our participation in it will bear fruit. We must let our heart speak words of praise to the Lord – if we speak from the heart we need no words. We must trust His mercy and offer ourselves to Him. We must thank Him for all He has given us. When we participate in the Mass we must concentrate on Jesus’ sacrifice to the Father and pray that we might offer ourselves along with Him. We must be eager to take part in the Mass.

Participating spiritually in all Eucharistic celebrations throughout the world is an excellent idea. “My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to my name, because my name will be great among the nations, says the Lord Almighty” (Malachi 1,11). We can share spiritually in so very many Masses!

### **Jesus living bread**

**148. Come and eat my bread.** In the Blessed Sacrament Jesus is food: “I am the bread of life” (John 6,48). This is why He lives in our midst. He repeats: “Come, eat my bread” (Proverbs 8,5) which is the bread of life. You who receive Communion must thank the Lord for your intimate participation in the sacrifice.

You must recognize the immense love Jesus has for us. Food is converted into the flesh of the one who eats it; Jesus said: “He who eats me will live through me” (John 6,57). He has shown His love by giving Himself entirely to us. How can we respond to that great a love? by returning that love and giving ourselves to Him without reservation. St. Teresa said: “One Communion well received is enough to make a soul a saint.” After so many Communions how is it that we are not yet saints and still have the same defects? We will always have defects but we can bring Jesus the sincere desire and effort to improve. We must not forego receiving Communion because of flaws or some little sin. You need not be a saint to receive Communion – in fact we receive Communion in order to become saints.

**149. You have called me and here I am!** We do not receive Communion out of habit or for human considerations – we receive Communion to express our desire for God and to grow in grace. This is the attitude we should have at Communion: the right intention, good will and fervor. If you fetch water with a cup you have only a cupful. If you fetch water with a bucket you will have a bucketful. This is how it is with Communion. We must strive to overcome our habitual faults. In the past the Blessed Sacrament was not even reserved in seminaries and Communion was only once a week on Sunday. Even in my own lifetime Communion was not an every day practice. For my part I would be happy if you went to Communion twice a day – if that were allowed ... When you pray the words “Give us this day our daily bread” in the Lord’s Prayer ask to receive Communion worthily.

To enjoy the abundant fruits of Holy Communion it is not only necessary to be in a state of grace, we must be free of venial sins, we must make careful preparation and appropriate thanksgiving. Let us take to heart the words of the prophet: “If you could split the heavens and come down!” (Isaiah 63,19). Let us imitate Haman who boasted about his invitation to dine with the king: “tomorrow I am invited by the King” (Esther 5,12). He was happy to dine with the king and we should be overjoyed at being invited to the divine banquet at which the Lord will share Himself with us – He will become our food. Let us imagine the Lord speaking to us as He did to Zacchaeus: “Come down forthwith, this day I will stay at your house” (Luke 19,5). The Lord wants to come into us and we should desire the same thing. With Samuel we can repeat: “You have called me and here I am” (I Samuel 3,6). Our life must be Eucharistic. Our mind and heart must be continually focused on the Blessed Sacrament: not just before and after Communion or during our visits to the Blessed Sacrament but all day long – when we study and when we work.

We receive Jesus, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity – as alive as He is in heaven. Let us approach Him with humility; let us look into our heart and be humbled by our defects; let us tell Him our desires. The Lord only asks for love – one who does not love the Lord cannot expect love. Let us speak to Him as a friend and tell Him what is in our heart. While looking at the consecrated host we must hear Him saying: It is indeed me, Jesus. Let us adore and thank Him for His many gifts: His call and our less than perfect response. Let us give ourselves totally to Him: heart, will, etc. Let us ask material and spiritual favors for ourselves and others; let us make acts of reparation and consolation. Then our Communion will be fervent. We will live our lives wholly with Jesus. Everything will begin and end with Him. Let us immerse ourselves in this spirit of faith: let us spiritualize ourselves! How happy we will be if we stay united to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. He will be our happiness in this life and our reward in the next.

### **Jesus: God with us**

**150. As a friend.** Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is our friend – therefore let us treat Him as such. He loves us and we love Him. Try to understand the mystery of His love for us: as our friend He receives us with affection – with eagerness – every time we visit Him. We must respond to this kindness by frequent, eager visits even if they are brief. We must enter His presence with faith and love, happy to be permitted this intimacy. Have faith and realize that He is there – make respectful genuflections and avoid all distractions. When you leave Church remain spiritually united to Him. Friends are always united. How happy you will be if you are constantly united to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. He will teach you all virtue and will light in you the fire He brought to earth and that through you He wants to spread. What happy missionaries you will be if you are filled with this love. Jesus will be your support, your comfort, your everything.

Our Congregation must prepare missionaries who are in love with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Yes, be in love with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. This must be our primary devotion. If He is present nothing else is needed: at His feet all is clear, all is in order. Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the center around which we revolve. He is the center from which all grace in the Congregation flows. Jesus in the tabernacle governs this house and all our mission communities.

**151. Willingly in His presence.** Let us make our visits to the Blessed Sacrament with faith and devotion. Let us remain willingly in His presence. Even in the missions you will continue to visit Jesus in the chapels and bring your thoughts and feelings to Him day and night. He will be your center. How pleased I am that through us God is multiplying the number of tabernacles in the world. So many new tabernacles! They are the focus of love for us and mercy for the people. How blest we are to have already so many in our missions. I believe, nay I am convinced, that they bring down blessings on those lands.

Only the Lord can truly comfort us if we seek Him out – He is the source of all consolation. We



may tell Him anything and He will listen, He will comfort us in our suffering and help us bear up. Visits to the Blessed Sacrament keep our faith alive. I want you to be so attached to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament that you cannot live without Him. When it is time to make a visit you are happy and eager; never regret whatever job may be interrupted.

If the Lord granted us the grace of daily adoration – day and night – like the Blessed Sacrament Fathers we would be happy. May we one day have perpetual adoration! Many congregations already practice this. I certainly want there to be continual adoration from the moment of my death until I am buried. Remember this when you are in the missions. The more time we pass in front of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament – the more time we want to spend there. Conversation with Him is never boring. During your visits speak to Jesus but let Him speak too. Remain with Him as you would with a friend. If you are devoted to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament you cannot fail to be holy missionaries.

**152. Make the Lord our own.** When it is impossible to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament just think He is present in a church somewhere and distance means nothing to Him. This is not just fantasy. How beautiful it is to make a spiritual tour of churches – there are so many! Throughout the day repeat ejaculations in honor of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament: they are like so many rays of light that start with Him and return to Him. Thinking of Jesus is always helpful. This is the whole idea – know how to live your faith in practice. I would like to lead all of you to real devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. I would like your eyes so fixed and intent that you are able to see Him in the tabernacle. This is not impossible if you have faith.

I so much want you to be filled with Our Lord ... Whoever loves the Lord is never bored, is never lonely ... Make the Lord our own! I want you to foster a genuine love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament – a love that continues when you are no longer in church, a love that is present in all places and at all times. I find it so pleasing when the tabernacle veil has an image of the pelican on it. We are linked to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and we are nourished by His blood.

It gives me great pleasure that my room faces the Blessed Sacrament – great pleasure indeed. I can see Him easily. There is a direct connection from my bed – I cannot just see Him, I can speak to Him! This is enormously helpful especially when we are suffering.

**153. Especially in mission.** If we spend day and night before the Blessed Sacrament are we wasting time? A missionary who believes he is doing his duty with constant travel and activity is making a big mistake. No, we must be devotees of the Blessed Sacrament! I want you to be devotees of the Blessed Sacrament (“Sacramentini”) – loving sons and daughters of Jesus in the Eucharist. All Christians should delight in this designation – children of the Blessed Sacrament – but especially priests and religious and missionaries even more so. Even though you are members of an active community you can and should be devotees of the Blessed Sacrament; you can and should practice recollection in the cloister of your own heart.

When suffering and difficulty arise in the missions bring them to Jesus and make them so many acts of love; if you are close to Him you will overcome all setbacks. Be devotees of the Blessed Sacrament: this is my hope for you, this is what I want you to become. Devotees not just of Our Lady, the Consolata, but of the Blessed Sacrament as well. It is not enough to work – you must pray and make reparation as well. Find your roots in the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament within you and in the tabernacle. Let Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament be your counselor, comfort and aid especially when you are in the missions. Whenever you endure misfortune or sin have recourse to the Blessed Sacrament.

Visits to the Blessed Sacrament will be your greatest comfort in the missions. Never neglect this practice once you are in mission – make a visit every day of the year. We must be devotees of the Blessed Sacrament both here and in the missions. Devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is all-

important. You will experience this in the missions. I want this to be the devotion of our Congregation.

## 9 All generations will call me blessed

### Cooperating with Jesus

**154. Queen of all missionaries.** I would be failing in my duty and my special affection for the Blessed Virgin if I did not take advantage of every possible occasion to speak about her. Our Lady is the Queen of all missionaries. To speak about her is a blessing – we collaborate with her in carrying out her prophecy: “All generations will call me blessed” (Luke 1,48). There is no town or village without a church, an altar or a shrine to Our Lady. Marian devotion is founded on the Gospel. Was there anyone who loved and honored Mary more than Jesus? At her request He performed His first miracle at the wedding feast in Cana. The Church applies to the Blessed Virgin the scripture passage: “Whoever finds me finds life and the favor of the Lord” (Proverbs 8,35). Devotion to Mary is a necessity. If you have no devotion – and not just devotion but tender devotion – to Our Lady you will never become saints.

**155. “Ad Jesum per Mariam”.** Our Lady’s intention was to cooperate with the Lord lest her Son’s blood be shed in vain. With Our Lord she is the Co-Redemptrix; she too bore the weight of our sins. Anything that wounds Jesus will wound and hurt Our Lady. She has chosen to give her name to our Congregation and to help save as many souls as possible. Anyone who wants to save himself and bypasses the Blessed Virgin is making a serious mistake. You can only reach Jesus through Mary: “ad Jesum per Mariam” – to Jesus through Mary!

Marian devotion is a sign of predestination. This is because Our Lady wants nothing more than the salvation of souls. We sometimes ask ourselves with wonder: “How is it that after many years of dissipation an individual is converted and dies at peace with God?” The answer is always this: he was devoted to Mary. I knew of someone who had abandoned all religious practice for more than forty years except for reciting three Hail Mary’s every day. Our Lady saw to it that he was given the grace of a good death. I am not saying that we need only say three Hail Mary’s and then do what we want; what I am saying is that Our Lady will lead us to repentance even after thirty or forty years if we honor her only a little.

Marian devotion is not just a guarantee of predestination it will make us saints. Anyone who wants to become a saint without Our Lady is someone who wants to fly without wings. The more we turn to her for grace and holiness the more we please Our Lord. All the saints were devoted to Our Lady. St. Jerome’s most beautiful homily is on Mary. It is hard to believe that this caustic saint could be so tender when he spoke of Our Lady. St. Bernard said that Mary is a spring and a channel. She is a fountain of grace – we need only draw from this fountain. She is a channel because all graces come to us through her. What God does through His omnipotence Mary does through prayer. Our Lady is omnipotent through grace. In God and with God she can do all things. She is the treasurer and dispenser of all grace. The saints called her – prayerful omnipotence.

**156. We can never be too devoted to Our Lady.** Her motherly tenderness is part of her Son’s plan. She is aware of the price He paid for us and she knows God’s specific will that all be saved. Never be afraid of being too devoted to Our Lady or of giving her too much honor. The more we love her, the more we have recourse to her the more we please Jesus. She is worthy of all the honorific titles Christian piety assigns to her; she well deserves her reputation as the Mother of mercy and compassion. She is honored and addressed as the Protectress of the holy souls in Purgatory. She is truly the Blessed Virgin and Queen, Mother and Comforter of the souls in Purgatory. Remember without devotion to Our Lady we will never accomplish anything for ourselves or others.

We must look on Our Lady as our true mother. St. Joseph Cafasso said: “In Mary you have a second mother. She may not take your first mother’s place but she may possibly love you more.” We trust

and love our mother. We must foster a son-like love for Mary and this love must grow in intensity; we must call her affectionately, “Mother.” How can we not like our mother? And if we like our earthly mother why should we not like our heavenly mother?

St. Louis Grignon de Montfort teaches that to make any progress on the path to holiness we must become slaves of Mary just as Francis Xavier was a slave of Jesus. We prefer to think of ourselves as children of Mary; we are in any case voluntary “slaves.” Our slavery consists in a total giving of ourselves to Mary. As a practical consequence we do everything with and through Our Lady – everything we have we receive from her. St. Joseph Cafasso told us to make Mary our “associate” in all things. “When you go to preach,” he said, “always take Our Lady with you. Go to preach the two of you together. Say to her: I will be the voice but you will do the preaching.” He called Our Lady his “associate.” To tell the truth I wanted to use some other word – but “associate” was the word he wanted. To do everything with Mary means taking Our Lady as our model in all things: how would Our Lady perform this action? Let us give ourselves totally to Our Lady, body and soul, so that she may do with us what she pleases and will help us to become saints.

### **Sons and daughters of Our Lady, the Consolata**

**157. The apple of her eye.** Behind her many titles there is but one Blessed Virgin; we especially should be devoted to her under the title “Consolata.” Is not Our Lady – under this title – our Mother and are we not her sons and daughters? She is our very tender mother who loves us like the apple of her eye; she is the inspiration of our Congregation; she has supported us both materially and spiritually all these many years and she is always quick to respond to our needs. Our real Foundress is Our Lady.

Undoubtedly everything we accomplish is the work of Our Lady, the Consolata. She performs daily miracles for our Congregation; she has made the stones cry out and rain money. In our times of trial Mary has always intervened miraculously. I have seen so much, so very much ... and if you watch closely you too will see and understand that our community’s spirit, our eagerness to become good missionaries – all of this is a gift from Our Blessed Lady, the Consolata. This does not even include the many gifts she gives us all year long – even material gifts: our daily bread. I believe Our Lady is responsible for this too – our daily bread. I have never lost sleep or appetite worrying about the enormous expenses of our Congregation or the missions. My prayer to Mary, the Consolata, is: “You worry about these things! We know you will do what is necessary.”

**158. Ours in a special way.** The Consolata is ours in a special way and we should be proud to have her as our Patron, piously proud of the fact that our Congregation is called “Consolata Missionaries.” We are a living manifestation of the miracles Our Lady performs. We must strive every day to be worthy of the name we bear: we are the sons and daughters of the Consolata. We must look on the fact that we bear Our Lady’s name as a blessing. When you are out in the world people do not refer to you simply as “missionaries” but rather as “Consolata missionaries.” They cannot refer to you without mentioning Our Lady. Everyone thinks of us as the “Benjamin’s” [youngest and favorite offspring] of Our Lady and as such they trust our prayers.

I say again we must be piously proud to belong to Our Lady the Consolata – many envy us. And many more love us because we are Consolata Missionaries! Your name should be an incentive to become all that you ought to be. Repeating the words of St. Bernard, “Show yourself a mother” is almost offensive! She does not need us reminding her to be a mother. It would be more appropriate for her to say: “Show yourself to be my son/daughter.” We are the beloved sons and daughters of the Consolata – but do we always act as such? Filial love is of its very nature tender. Just as children are always turning to their mother we must have constant recourse to her all day long. Anyone without strong feeling or special love for the Consolata is heartless and if there is one thing we need it is heart.

**159. Novena and Feast of the Consolata.** I would be offending you if I urged you to make the novena in preparation for the feast of the Consolata especially well. All we need remember is that we are approaching the feast of our very dear Mother – this says it all. Is this feast especially important for us the beloved sons and daughters of the Consolata? For us it is everything! I do not urge you to prepare for this feast – I know you are already convinced of the need to make the novena and celebrate this feast enthusiastically. Our heart dictates what we must do for our Mother. We must be committed to this special homage. We have so many favors to ask of her: first of all that we may grow in numbers and grace so that we can better respond to her call. This feast should make us want to please Mary more – to pay homage as her sons and daughters. Since we celebrate all the feasts of Our Lady with intense love how much more we should celebrate this feast which is especially our own.

**160. Joseph Allamano’s prayer to the Consolata.** “I thank you, Mary, for the thirty-five years you have protected this sanctuary ... and what have I done during these thirty-five years? ... If someone else had done this job what would have been accomplished? ... But I do not even want to think about that. If I had done so poorly you would not have kept me here so many years! This is certainly an indication of your special favor! ... If I have done poorly you will take care of it, you will repair the damage, and that will be the end of it. Please accept everything as if I had performed perfectly. I do not want to rationalize – I will accept things as they are; but since you have kept me here you must be satisfied with my work.” I believe Our Lady smiled at this.

### **Marian Mysteries**

**161. The Immaculate Conception.** The Immaculate Conception of Mary is a joyful mystery. It is a feast that touches our heart. Our Lady’s feasts are a series of celebrations one more beautiful than the other. Even though I was a child at the time I remember the enormous celebrations of 1854 when the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was proclaimed. Later as the spiritual director in the seminary I urged everyone to celebrate the novena and feast with devotion. So many years have gone by and by God’s will I find myself urging the same thing. We should be happy that our Mother was immaculate from the very moment of her conception. A child rejoices at the virtues of his mother. Let us rejoice with Our Lady: “Thou art all beautiful, Mary, and there is no original sin in you.” God preserved you from original sin in view of the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lady was not inclined to evil and could not sin. From the very first moment of her life she was filled with the Holy Spirit, she was full of grace and above all other creatures.

“Its foundation is on the holy mountains” (Psalm 86,1). The Fathers referred this psalm to Our Lady. On this feast day the Church celebrates all the privileges Our Lady received. “You are all beautiful, O Mary!”; “Full of Grace!” When we say these words we know they were not just addressed to Mary – they have meaning for us: “Come close to me you who are hungry and have your fill of my abundance” (Sirach 24,18). We must approach Our Lady always and with confidence. The Lord has made her a source of grace.

Genuine love of Mary is not a thing of sentiment – no it is a readiness to do everything the service of God and her honor requires. Tenderness is not superfluous – it is necessary. We must pray to and imitate the Immaculate Virgin – above all in the purity of our intentions. We are the favored children of Our Lady and one day we will be jewels in her crown. Jewels, however, must be polished and consequently we must allow ourselves to be polished and worked on as are precious gems.

**162. The Presentation of Mary in the Temple.** The feast of the Presentation of Mary in the Temple

has always been celebrated in the east where devotion to Our Lady flourished and was promoted by the great Fathers, John Damascene, John Chrysostom, etc. The feast was celebrated in the west, but only privately. Pope Sixtus V extended it to the whole Church. I like this feast very much and I have proposed it as the patronal feast for the novitiate. In this mystery Mary is the very model of religious, priestly and missionary formation. She is a model of the hidden life, of obedience, work and charity. By practicing these virtues she prepared herself for the dignity of Divine Maternity. You must similarly prepare yourselves for your future mission.

In the mystery of her presentation in the Temple the Blessed Virgin's offering of herself to the Lord was eager, total and irrevocable. It was above all eager. In paintings she is depicted mounting the steps to the Temple – almost running. She responded eagerly to God's call: God loves the early ones: those who respond immediately – those who respond more than once. Were we eager to respond to the Lord's call? At least now let our response be eager. Mary's offering was total, she held nothing back. She offered her whole self and all her resources to total and eternal consecration to God. She remained in the Temple determined to refuse the Lord nothing. Have we given everything to the Lord: our mind, heart, soul? If after so many graces and insights we remain much the same it is because we have not given ourselves totally to the Lord. Finally Mary offered herself irrevocably. Do we do the same? Our offering too must be irrevocable. We must move forward without looking back. Falling is not so harmful as not getting up again. We must always begin again without losing heart. The Lord has been generous with us but He wants us to be equally generous with Him in return. He is our chosen portion. Let us ask Our Lady for this grace: that our response may be eager, total and irrevocable.

**163. The Annunciation.** Christmas is a great feast but the real feast of the Incarnation of the Word is the Annunciation! Mary is addressed as "Full of Grace"; she is told the Lord is with her and that she would become the mother of Jesus. Bowing her head to the will of God she replied, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." What should we do to live this mystery? In particular we be especially fervent when we repeat at Mass those beautiful words, "and the Word was made flesh." We should pray the Hail Mary with special fervor – it commemorates the mystery of the Annunciation. We should thank the Holy Trinity for this gift above all other gifts: the Divine Incarnation. We should offer up the little sacrifices of our lives and congratulate Our Lady for having been chosen to become the Mother of the Incarnate Word.

**164. The Visit to Elizabeth.** The Church celebrates the mystery of the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth. During her three-month visit Mary led an apparently ordinary life – but internally it was anything but ordinary. She did what all women do for their neighbors in these circumstances. You too must sanctify yourselves in this way: by doing everything well and for the love of God. It is so very hard to do everything with the proper intention. Doing a great deal is not as important as doing everything well.

This mystery teaches us that Mary is a channel of grace. At the very sound of her voice the baby in Elizabeth's womb leapt and was sanctified. Elizabeth addressed her as "Blessed among women." Mary then gave glory and honor to God with her canticle, the Magnificat. Father Henri Didon wrote: "The Magnificat surpasses all human capacity; it is the most splendid cry of joy that has ever burst forth from the human heart. Mary thinks only of her lowliness and exalts only God. She predicts her own glory but sees it only as God's triumph."

The Magnificat is made up of words from Scripture. It is ten verses long and is divided into three parts. In the first part Mary rejoices at the benefits God has conferred upon her, especially the Divine Motherhood: "My soul magnifies the Lord because he has looked upon his handmaid ..." The Lord looked at her lowliness, at the nothingness of His handmaid; He raised her up and accomplished marvelous things in her so that all generations will be filled with wonder and will call

her blessed! In the second part Mary rejoices in the benefits God has bestowed on mankind over the centuries: “His mercy extends from generation to generation ...” First to the chosen people and then to the gentiles and all who fear the Lord. “The Lord has done great things with his arm ...” What are these great things? He has humbled the proud and lifted up the lowly; He has satisfied those who hunger for justice and truth. “He has filled the hungry with good things ...” This means the Lord is always ready to fill with good things those who desire Him. In the third part Mary speaks of the sovereign benefit of the Redemption that through the conception of Jesus has begun in her and will extend to all future generations, “as He promised to Abraham.” In Abraham all generations had been blessed because from his seed would come the Redeemer. We should meditate often on the Magnificat; we should pray and sing it with the spirit and enthusiasm of Our Lady; we should share her feelings.

**165. Our Lady of Sorrows.** On September 20 I celebrated my first Mass – it was the liturgy of Our Lady of Sorrows. We must be devoted to Our Lady of Sorrows. Devotion to the sorrows of Our Lady is dear to Mary’s heart and of great benefit to us. We must often reflect on how close we are to Our Lady and she was intimately united to the Passion of Our Lord: all His sufferings reverberated in her, in her heart. From the moment she was chosen to be the Mother of the Redeemer God made her foresee – through Simeon’s prophecy – the bloodless martyrdom she would have to endure. The whole life of Our Lady, like that of her Son, was the Cross and martyrdom. Mary, in the delicacy of her heart, shared her Son’s great sufferings. The Mother as well as the Son will be pleased at our devotion. This is a duty for all Christians but especially for us who are the sons and daughters of the Consolata. We have a special duty to comfort our Mother and make her the consoled one – the Consolata. This is why we bear this name.

St. Alphonsus referred to Mary as the Queen of Martyrs because her martyrdom was more prolonged and painful than that of all the other martyrs combined. St. Bernard tells us that Mary was a martyr in her soul. She suffered all things for us and for our salvation. When we think of Our Lady’s sorrows we must say to ourselves: “She did this for me.” We must foster this devotion not just out of love and gratitude to Our Mother but for our own benefit as well. St. Joseph Cafasso tells us that this devotion is helpful throughout life and at the moment of death. As Christians and especially as missionaries we will all suffer. Who will support us in our suffering? Our best help will come from Mary. She will be at our side when we encounter sacrifice; she will win us genuine repentance for our sins – and at the moment of death she will come to our assistance.

When we pray the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary let us think of Our Lady’s sufferings united to the sufferings of Our Lord. She is at his side in the journey from Gethsemane to Calvary. Devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows will break the hardness of our hearts and make us appreciate prayer. Let us honor and comfort our Lady of Sorrows since we are the sons and daughters of the Consolata.

**166. Assumption.** From the earliest centuries this has been the most solemn of all the feasts the Church celebrates in honor of Mary. St. Ambrose wrote: “Since Mary is the mother of Jesus, the head of the Church, she is in a sense the Mother of the Church.”

This feast commemorates the transition and assumption, body and soul, into heaven of the Blessed Virgin. In the Apocalypse St. John wrote about a heavenly woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet. On her head was a crown of twelve stars (Cf. Apocalypse 12,1). The woman is a symbol of the Church and the twelve stars are the twelve apostles. The Fathers saw Mary in this woman who shone like the sun. She shines in heaven like the sun (Jesus) because she stands at His right hand. “At your right hand is the queen in gold of Ophir” (Psalm 45,9). The best way to celebrate this feast is to imitate the way she lived which merited the glory she now enjoys in heaven. Imitation involves repeated acts of detachment from the world and the things of this world; we must live every day as if it were the last day of our life. It would be our great good fortune to die

like Mary out of love of God!

In the Liturgy of the Hours we sing that beautiful antiphon: Hail Queen of Heaven. We must sing and pray it often with feeling and joy; we must rejoice that our dear Mother has been raised on high and made the Queen of Heaven! Take courage! Our eyes and hearts are fixed on heaven. Not just today but always.

## **Marian Prayers**

**167. Hail Mary.** The most excellent prayer to Our Lady is surely the Hail Mary. How did it originate? The angel Gabriel was sent by God and said to our Lady: “I greet you, o full of grace, the Lord is with you” (Luke 1,28). St. Elizabeth inspired by the Holy Spirit uttered the words: “Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb!” (Luke 1,42). With the inspiration of the Holy Spirit the Church provided the additional words.

How often we pray the Hail Mary! Three times a day in the Angelus and fifty times in the rosary. How many times do we say this prayer in a single day, month or year? How many Hail Mary’s will we recite throughout our life? St. Alphonsus believes this greeting revives the joy Mary felt at the moment of the Annunciation. We must always pray it well and make the sentiments of Gabriel, Elizabeth and the Church our own. Every time we say this prayer we should say it with such enthusiasm that our heart leaps within us. If we really prayed it with love and delight we would linger over every word and not rush through it.

**168. Hail Holy Queen.** After the Hail Mary the most beautiful and useful Marian prayer is the Hail Holy Queen. St. Alphonsus called the Salve “the most fervent of prayers: it describes wonderfully the mercy and power of the Blessed Virgin Mary.” The prayer is made up of three parts. The first part, “Hail Holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope!” is an introduction and addresses Mary with five honorific titles. Our Lady is both Queen and Mother. She is a “Queen” – a title repeated so many times in the Litany of Loreto. She is the “Mother of Mercy” given to us by Our Lord. She shares the other three titles with Jesus who is our true “life,” “sweetness,” and “hope.” The second part of the prayer is a petition. We ask Our Lady to assist us in this “vale of tears” and be our advocate with her Son. We ask her to grant us the grace we need here on earth so that we may one day see and enjoy the blessed fruit of her womb: Jesus! The third part of the prayer is an appeal. It is said that these final invocations come from St. Bernard of Clairvaux. People were singing the Salve Regina in a church and when they reached the end St. Bernard cried out “O clement, o loving, o sweet Virgin Mary!” The saints loved this prayer as they did the Hail Mary.

**169. The Rosary.** We have so often heard speak of the excellence of the Holy Rosary in itself and in the respect both popes and saints have shown it. It has been a channel of spiritual and temporal favors for us and all mankind both in time and in eternity. The Rosary is simultaneously a mental and an oral prayer. The oral part of the prayer involves the Our Father which St. Augustine described as a short prayer that nonetheless covers all our needs. Father Giuseppe Bruno<sup>1</sup> would often repeat the words attributed to Tertullian that the Our Father with its seven petitions is a synthesis of the Gospel. We have already talked about the Hail Mary. These two prayers are the very best we can address to Our Lord and Our Lady.

The Rosary is also a mental prayer. It is the best possible meditation on the lives of Our Lord and

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<sup>1</sup> Father Giuseppe Bruno (1826-1907) was an Oratorian and the zealous pastor of St. Eusebius Church (known also as St. Philip’s) in Turin. Allamano learned his love of ceremonies – even the least important – from Canon G.M. Soldati and Father Bruno. Cf. the anonymous biography *Chi era il P. Bruno*, Turin 1908. Allamano frequently quoted Bruno’s text, *Conferenze al Clero*, Turin 1909, 347 pp.



Our Lady and this meditation makes the prayers recited all the more sweet. It is not necessary that we spend all our time thinking about the mystery – but it would be better if we could. Nor is it necessary that we restrict this or that set of mysteries to the day prescribed. In private recitation one is free to do as one pleases. St. Augustine tells us that in meditation we must give our heart free rein. Prayed in this fashion the Rosary will nourish both our heart and our soul; we should feel a new eagerness to say this holy prayer.

Some object that we repeat the same prayer over and over! Love, Lacordaire tells us, has but one word: the more it is repeated the sweeter and newer it becomes. When someone loves his mother he does not seek new and different words. Can one ever tire of saying the Hail Mary? We could go into ecstasy all day long just saying these words: Hail Mary! The repetition is only boring for someone who does not love Our Lady, for someone without soul. If I say it with fervor the first time I will say it with enthusiasm the second. Love and respect this practice and never think of it as a burden. Engrave it on your hearts and make it part of your plans.

**170. Month of Mary.** As sons and daughters of the Consolata we must celebrate the month of Mary with special fervor. Everyone should love Our Lady but missionaries even more so. Let us sanctify this month by honoring her and growing in our love for her. Above all pray well – as well as you can – and be one with Mary and the Lord all day long. Pray with all your heart and enthusiasm the Hail Holy Queen, the Angelus, the Rosary and all the other Marian prayers. I really want Our Lady to be happy with us.

To make sacrifices in honor of Our Lady is no mean thing but it is even better to imitate her virtues. During this month – a month of special grace – we must strive to make progress in those virtues Our Lady teaches us. To honor Our Lady during this month we must pray, pay her homage and practice her virtues. At the same time we must ask the Lord for a constant, strong and confident love for her – she is our mother. How beautiful and full our lives will be if we are devoted to Mary. I want you to celebrate the “month of Mary” all year long – you must be overflowing with devotion to Our Lady. She continues to show her love for our Congregation. I have named her our Patron and Guardian and she is doing what is expected of her. We have images of the Consolata everywhere – let us honor them from our hearts.

## 10 Our Eyes Fixed on the Lord

### Word of God

**171. God's heart is in His Word.** The Book of Macabees describes a letter Areios the King of Sparta sent to Jonathan the High Priest. He offered friendship and assistance to the Jews but Jonathan who was the High Priest responded beautifully in this way: "we need none of these things, for we have the holy books of scripture in our hands to comfort us" (I Macabees 12,9). Scripture was enough to comfort them in the midst of their many tribulations. St. Paul said the same thing to the Romans, "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Romans 15,4). Paul is saying: Scripture strengthens our hope and comforts us when we encounter life's trials.

The saints looked on Scripture as the source of their support. The early Fathers of the Church, Jerome, Augustine, Ambrose, etc. did not possess theology manuals. The Bible was their only book. St. Jerome said without knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures life was worth very little. "In Scripture," St. Gregory the Great writes, "we must see the heart of God." St. Augustine: "There is no sickness of the soul Sacred Scripture cannot cure." St. Charles Borromeo was asked why he never took walks in the garden and answered: "My garden is Sacred Scripture." The saints found life and comfort in Scripture. God's Word pierces our soul like a sword; it meets all our needs.

**172. The Word of God is useful, alive and heart-warming.** In itself Sacred Scripture is the apex of excellence and supremely useful for us and our ministry. St. Paul says as much in his letter to Timothy: "All Scripture is God-inspired and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Timothy 3,16). How very important Sacred Scripture is for us and everyone else! This is the whole thing in a nutshell: it is the Word of God, it is alive and it is heart-warming. St. Jerome wrote, "The Holy Bible is so comfortable in our hands that we often fall asleep with this book in our hands."

Reading Sacred Scripture awakens the love of God in our hearts. Lord, Your words are fire and as fire they bring us warmth. Look at the disciples of Emmaus who walked along the road with the Lord and did not recognize Him: "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24,32). Our Lord's words are fire!

On the Fifteenth Centenary of St. Jerome's death, Pope Benedict XV wrote the encyclical *Spiritus Paraclitus*. He states that all of Sacred Scripture is divinely inspired and should be studied for our devotion and preaching. Some years earlier Pope Leo XIII published the encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* to promote the study of Sacred Scripture which he defined as divinely inspired. Let us bear in mind that since Sacred Scripture is the "Word of God" we should both respect and study it. Our own library is especially rich in the area of Sacred Scripture. In the missions too you will have a small library.

**173. Reading and studying Sacred Scripture.** How should we approach and use Holy Scripture? Above all we must read and study it carefully: "You diligently study the Scriptures [...]. These are the Scriptures that testify about me" (John 5,39). Therefore you must not read the Bible casually – stop and think about what you are reading; read a few verses at a time and then pause. St. Augustine tells us that the words of Scripture have marvelous depth. They are like a bottomless well – it takes an effort to draw up water, but the effort is sweet and comforting. Those who think that with the Bible alone they will understand everything are mistaken. God reveals Himself to the simple and hides Himself from the proud. We must study Sacred Scripture with humility, simplicity and loyalty to Church teaching. The *Imitation of Christ* tells us: "Anyone who wants to understand and savor the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ must make his life like Christ's." We can certainly engage in

interpretation but our criteria must be from reliable sources.

Other requirements for reading Holy Scripture profitably are purity of life and prayer: pray while you read and ask the Lord for enlightenment. Great respect for the Bible is another requirement; St. Charles Borromeo always uncovered his head and knelt when he read the sacred text. Finally we must read it in the same spirit with which it was written. If we satisfy these requirements we will derive great profit from Sacred Scripture.

**174. Our book.** Sacred Scripture will make all those who study it and prepare for good works perfect. It is a source of all grace and virtue – it provides everything we need to become saints. It is a genuine treasure, a storehouse of remedies, in which we find all we will need. There are remedies for everything; we will find all that is useful for ourselves and others. When you confront a specific problem or worry about the future – read the Holy Scripture and you will find comfort.

I am telling you all this so that you will continue to read Sacred Scripture attentively and will become attached to it. It is our book. Whoever reads the Bible will have his spirit renewed. It is not enough to be familiar with the inspired book – we should find delight and nourishment in it. St. Augustine says we should interpret the Sacred Text for our own spiritual benefit and we can do this with a certain liberty since all applications are worthwhile. The inspirations that come to us while reading the Bible may not derive from the text itself but if they are beneficial we should follow them.

Holy Scripture! The more we read it, the more we study it, the more we will love it and find delight in it. In our Congregation Holy Scripture has always held first place and this will always be true. This is our primary study, the source of everything we study in theology, something we must continue to study throughout our lives. In the missions this should be your daily reading and it will become your consolation. When you are troubled read the Bible. You must read and meditate upon it. This is a school that never comes to an end. Let us love Sacred Scripture wholeheartedly – especially the Gospels and the letters of Paul. I want you to become attached to Holy Scripture!

## **Prayer**

**175. Pray always without tiring.** We cultivate our interior life. Every action, spiritual and material, must begin and end with God. This spirit must accompany us every day of our life – only then will our lives truly belong totally to the Lord. Certainly the primary, most excellent and powerful of all prayers is the Mass. All other prayers point towards the Mass as their center. St. Thomas tells us that prayer elevates the mind, the heart and the whole soul into the presence of God. Should we pray? The Lord urges us to pray: we must “pray unceasingly without tiring” (Luke 18,1). “Watch and pray” (Matthew 26,41). And St. Paul, “pray ceaselessly” (I Thessalonians 5,17). The Lord Himself gives us an example: “In those days Jesus went off to the mountain to pray and passed the night in prayer” (Luke 6,12); “Gripped with anxiety He prayed more intensely” (Luke 22,44). The apostles did likewise: “We, on the other hand, devoted ourselves to prayer” (Acts 6,5).

To live well we must pray. St. Augustine tells us that to learn how to pray well is to learn how to live well. They say that St. Martin’s whole life was a ceaseless prayer: his eyes and hands were always raised to heaven. One who prays will be faithful to his vocation. Perseverance in one’s vocation is a great gift from God – only praying often and well will ensure it. I can affirm from my own personal experience that those who pray keep their vocation. In Msgr. Gastaldi’s time some people complained that seminarians spent too much time in prayer and should devote more time to study. Gastaldi did not agree. He later remarked, “They tell me, my dear seminarians, that I am making you pray too much. No, No! (his voice and gestures would become more emphatic) I am making you pray too little!” I would say the same thing to you: one can never pray enough.

St. Augustine urged his disciples to be devout – to cultivate the spirit of prayer. One might think that

a Doctor of the Church, the greatest philosopher and theologian that ever lived, would have urged his followers to study more. But quite the contrary – he urged piety. The saints appreciated devotion and preferred it to everything else; they knew well that “piety is useful in every circumstance.” Piety will unite us to God and everything else will follow; the Lord will give us the grace we need if we pray well. At the moment of his death he said: charity and piety. We know that words said at the moment of death are sacred – they are a last will and testament.

**176. The more work you have the more you should pray.** Prayer is especially necessary for priests and missionaries. St. Joseph Cafasso said the priest must be a man of prayer. He would make the somewhat slangy but effective statement: Prayer was the priest’s job. If a priest does not pray often he is not a genuine priest. And missionaries? What can they possibly accomplish when they ignore the primary means to remain united with God? And how can we accomplish anything worthwhile if we are not united to God? We can accomplish more in fifteen minutes with prayer than in two hours without prayer. Our words are worthless if God’s grace is not present. Our primary obligation – and never forget it – is not to roll up our sleeves and work but to pray.

St. Joseph Cafasso further said, “It pains me to see priests who have too much work!” The expression “to work is to pray” can be misinterpreted. One who works out of obedience or necessity and does his work for God – prays. This does not free him from the need for real prayer even at the expense of time spent doing apostolic work. Remember the words of St. Bernard: we should be pools as well as channels. A channel allows water to pass without retaining anything for itself. Pools fill themselves up first and then let the extra water pass on to others.

Listen to what St. Paul has to say: “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow” (I Corinthians 3,6-7). We are not the ones who accomplish something – it is the Lord; if He does not bless our work it is all in vain. It hurts me to hear someone say: “I can’t pray I have so many preaching engagements!” This individual may be preaching but he is really crying in the wind. Look at St. Joseph Cafasso – did he ever omit reading his breviary, praying the rosary or making meditation because he had too much to do? If he found no time during the day he would pray at night. This is how he composed those magnificent sermons and intense prayers to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

It is so very easy to confuse our priorities! First of all we must become saints: first prayer and then good works for others. Let us love prayer. Pray and pray well. Never think that time devoted to prayer is time wasted. There are those who say “Nowadays we need action, action!” You should work but there is far more need of prayer than of work. We need God’s spirit. This is true in the missions as well: we will not be working alone out there. The more work you have to do the more you should pray. Some individuals no longer pray and use their work for others as an excuse – but in reality they are of no use to themselves or others. I am telling you all this because I want you to become men and women of prayer – from morning till night.

**177. The Lord will not give us stones for bread.** We must pray with the certainty that our prayers will be answered. God is all-powerful and infinitely generous; He both wants and can give us grace – we need only ask for it. One who knows how to pray well ties God’s hands and forces Him to give what is asked for. There are those who pray uncertain if their prayers will be answered. “Who knows if God will grant me this favor?” The Lord does not like this kind of feeble faith. We must be confident and insist: “I want it.” We must snatch favors from the Lord with our faith. We must have the sort of confidence that makes us appear bold, or even a bully – demanding miracles. The Lord will not be offended by this.

We must pray with humility. If we approach the Lord like the Pharisee and say: “Look at what I have given up, the sacrifices I have made, etc.” we will come away empty-handed. When praying

our attitude must be one of humility: “Father, I deserve nothing – but I call on the merits of Your Son and ask you to grant the grace I need.” Our requests for favors must pass through the stream of Our Lady, the River of the Lord and into the ocean that is the Father.

We must persevere and not lose heart if God does not answer our prayers immediately. We knock on the door and if it isn’t opened we knock harder and if that doesn’t work we break down the door! The Lord teaches us to do this in the parable of the man who continues to annoy his neighbor during the night until he gives him bread (Cf. Luke 11,5-9).

Usually when you make a novena to the saints the favor is not granted immediately. Apparently the saints do not hear the first time you ask. If you make a second novena the saint begins to listen; if you make a third novena the saint will respond and grant the favor. If we are not granted the favor we prayed for we must never think that a syllable or a word of our prayer has fallen into the void. Prayer is never wasted time. Prayer is absolutely necessary if we are to accomplish anything worthwhile.

**178. Praying the Liturgy of the Hours.** St. Benedict called the Liturgy of the Hours the Work of God; for St. Bonaventure it is an imitation of the heavenly choir. The angels and saints raise their voice in unceasing praise of God in heaven and through the Liturgy of the Hours so the Church proclaims His praise here on earth. The Hymn for the Dedication of a Church says this so well: “In the heavenly dwelling place – praise sounds eternally – and with unceasing song – the One and Triune God is exalted. – We join our praise to theirs, imitating beloved Zion.”

When we pray the Liturgy of the Hours we must make the sentiments expressed our own. When we pray the psalms we should bear in mind the words of St. Augustine: “If the psalm sighs, sigh; if it prays, pray; if it rejoices, rejoice; if it hopes, hope; if it fears, fear.” How beautiful the Church’s words are! They are the words of the Holy Spirit. We would need entire days to relish them properly. I remember when I was a seminarian I resolved to read all the psalms from the first to the last during my vacation. I managed to do this – and found there was always something new to learn. Anyone approaching ordination should read the psalms through and try to understand them in depth.

We should follow the timetable the Church sets out for reciting the Liturgy of the Hours and never postpone prayer because we have too much work. To pray at the appropriate time is a sweet burden. Regarding place – we should if possible recite these prayers in church, the house of prayer. After Mass the Liturgy of the Hours is the best of prayers. Praising God is one of our primary concerns – it is something we will continue doing for all eternity.

**179. Meditation warms the heart.** We must reawaken within ourselves an ardent love of God and we can do this through praying properly and practicing daily meditation – a fire that will warm our soul. I hope to convince all of you of the importance of meditation (mental prayer); meditation should become a habit that you practice well and with relish. It is absolutely necessary if we hope to foster devotion, grow in the love of God and avoid sin. St. Alphonsus wrote that all the saints became saints by practicing mental prayer – it is therefore the shortest route to holiness. It is also necessary if we are to do good for others; it is written: “Blessed is the man ... whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers” (Psalm 1,2-3).

We would make a distinction between meditation in the broad sense of the word and formal meditation. Everyone can practice this first sort of meditation at any time during the day. “How much I love your law, O Lord; I spend the whole day meditating on it” (Psalm 119,97). Even simple people can meditate: when they are on their way to the field and say “O Lord, I thank you for the good weather!” or while they are working “O Lord, I am doing this for You” or when from time to

time they think of the Lord. This type of meditation is accessible to all and it is this type the saints recommend it to everyone. A farmer once came to tell me his daughter had decided to become a nun. I told him I would pray that the Lord would grant him the grace to make this sacrifice. He said, "Yes, pray for me, I need prayers and I don't ever pray. I go around all day with my head in the air." Within a few minutes what he said revealed such deep faith and feeling that I realized he often thought of God. This was not formal meditation but it was nonetheless genuine as is praying slowly and thinking of each word. This is the kind of meditation you can practice whatever else you may be doing. This is the kind of thinking that keeps us in the presence of God.

For ordinary Christians this general type of meditation is enough. We, however, are committed to formal meditation as well and this involves reading a passage slowly, thinking about it and exercising our will and affection to make practical decisions. We choose the passage that has made the strongest impression and think about it – at the same time making acts of love, thanksgiving and praise. Meditation is the work of the mind but it affects the heart. It is not enough just to think about something our affection and intention must be involved. Meditation must engage our total concentration; we must place ourselves in the presence of God. We begin by reading the passage that struck us; it is not necessary to meditate on each single word – it is probably better to focus on one point; the heart finds nourishment and chews it over and over – just like a cow. We conclude our meditation by making resolutions - few and practical - and asking the Lord to help us keep them.

This morning, for example, I meditated on the parable of the good seed and the weeds. I thought: my heart is a field – is there good seed sown in it? Yes but unfortunately there are probably weeds as well. Weeds can be malice or some other imperfection; weeds can be a reluctance to obey. O Lord – how many weeds there are! Grant me the grace to root them out immediately – let me not tarry, let me weed the field immediately. And then the good seed may be weak and feeble. Oh if it were only beautiful and healthy. Whatever I do today – I want it to be good seed, therefore I will avoid this occasion or that temptation. We must be committed to meditation and never omit it; if we really delight in meditation we will always find the time. St. Alphonsus tells us that a day without meditation is a day wasted.

**180. Milestones during the day.** Mental prayer alone is not enough – we must also practice vocal prayer and manifest externally what we feel within. When we are filled with the love of God and genuinely enthusiastic showing these feelings through vocal prayer is the most natural thing in the world. Vocal prayer is as necessary as external worship, the support and logical consequence of internal worship. When Jesus tells us in the Gospel to pray, He is talking about vocal prayer as well as mental prayer.

How do we practice vocal prayer? First of all we must not simply say the words. Isaiah, speaking for the Lord, reproved the Jewish people: "These people approach me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me" (Isaiah 29,13). To say the Our Father over and over again without grasping its meaning is pointless. Prayer requires concentration and feeling. We must know we are saying and both understand and follow the meaning: we must speak to God heart to heart.

Vocal prayer can be individual or common (with others). Common prayer has strength and the Lord listens to it willingly – He told us as much in the Gospel. We must be committed to common prayer; we must join in prayer with the community. All those who are in the missions unite themselves to us in this prayer and so it is the body of the Institute which prays in union with the Church. We must prefer common to private prayer; our private prayers should be few and sincere.

Our Congregation prescribes several vocal prayers to be recited in common. Why are these prayers spread throughout the day? Because they help us sanctify the day and keep us mindful of God's love as we perform our daily tasks. St. Paul urges us: "And whatever you do, whether in word or

deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Colossians 3,17). Vocal prayers are milestones that mark our journey through the day; they make us reflect on what we are doing and keep us close to God. We must be determined to say these prayers carefully and not hurriedly; we must say these prayers with interior and exterior devotion. There is never any justification for hurried prayers. If vocal prayer is recited slowly and with devotion it becomes mental prayer.

**181. A spirit of prayer.** We know that Jesus told us to pray always (Cf. Luke 18,1); we must be enveloped in a spirit of prayer just as our bodies are enveloped in clothes. We pray in the morning and evening and at various times throughout the day; these are acts of prayer and this habit creates a spirit of prayer.

How is it that after so many days, months and years of performing these acts of devotion we are still so far from perfection? We are not just saying this to be humble – it is the truth. There can be only one answer: either we do not pray well or we derive no benefit from our prayers. In a field or vineyard it is not enough to plant good seed carefully – we must tend the plants until they are ready to be harvested. We must see our devotions as gardens where we gather bouquets of flowers that perfume the whole day.

We must live in a spirit of recollection; we must avoid dissipation and practice the presence of God. Dissipation is like a wind that blows away everything in its path. Certainly it takes time and effort to cultivate a spirit of recollection – but it is something we must do. It will be even more difficult in the missions given the many works you have to perform. A spirit of recollection is absolutely necessary if we are to derive any benefit from what we do. Otherwise our devotional practices are isolated events, oases in the midst of a desert. When it is impossible to keep our mind fixed on God we must refer all our actions to Him and then everything will become a prayer. This is what a spirit of prayer consists of – it will be supremely helpful for our inner life.

Missionaries ought to be capable of preserving a spirit of recollection everywhere; they should be able to move from study or work to prayer; they also are to be close to God through continual or frequent thoughts of Him; in short they must pray together and be totally committed to prayer. Without this spirit they will never be good missionaries. They may deceive themselves and think they are good missionaries – but they are not. Happy are those who manage to make progress in the interior life with a spirit of recollection and prayer.

**182. In the presence of God.** Our ideal is to live permanently in the presence of God – one of the most effective ways of becoming a saint. The Lord told Abraham: “I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless” (Genesis 17,1). Many of the patriarchs were praised because they walked in the presence of God. Enoch “walked with God” (Genesis 5, 22). Among his contemporaries, Noah was a just and blameless man who “walked with God” (Genesis 6,9). What wonderful praise! Each step they took was in the presence of the Lord. When we walk in the presence of God we do things well, perfectly.

It is absolutely necessary that we live, breathe and lose ourselves in God. “I keep my eyes fixed on the Lord” (Psalm 25, 15). I like this expression so much – it is something to commit to memory. Let us keep our eyes ever fixed on God just as God’s eyes are continually fixed on us. God sees me! The angels and saints rejoice in heaven “because they continually see the face of my Father” (Matthew 18,1). Even though we cannot see Him with our bodily eyes if we are accustomed to living in His presence we will enjoy heaven on earth. The Lord Himself is heaven.

One way to live in the presence of God is to reflect on His immensity: “In Him we live, we move and we exist” (Acts 17,28). On our own we cannot take a step without God. St. Ambrose tells us: “God is without, God is within, God is everywhere.” Another way of living in His presence is to think about the Lord Jesus Christ present in our churches. He is in the Blessed Sacrament with His

real presence and we are really present before Him – distance means nothing to Him. Awareness of Jesus' presence in the Blessed Sacrament must become a habit for us. He looks at me and I look at Him – our looks meet in love. Another way to live in the presence of God is to think of His indwelling within us: "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (John 14,23). St. Paul writes: "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?" (I Corinthians 3,16). What an extraordinary and comforting thought. We are truly the temple of God!

St. Joseph Cafasso had many little cards printed which he distributed everywhere. On the card was written "God sees me!" St. Joseph Cottolengo had already done this in the Little House of Providence. We must repeat often to ourselves, "God sees me!" Never forget that we are in the presence of God. This in no way impedes our work. One can be totally focused on work and totally focused on God. Remember if we want to energize our daily activity we must grasp these methods. They are things that make an impression, they are things that delight us. Try it and you will see that it is heaven.



## 11 Walking in the Spirit

### Examination of Conscience

**183. Knowing Ourselves.** Saints and spiritual masters are unanimous in recommending the examination of conscience. They consider it one of the most effective methods for correcting faults, achieving conversion and becoming saints. To some extent the great spiritual master, St. Ignatius Loyola, thought more highly of the examination than he did of vocal prayer or even meditation. He said that through meditation the Lord reveals what our conduct should be but the examination of conscience makes us aware of what it actually is. He recommended the examination of conscience to his first followers; in his view it was second in importance only to the sacraments. That excellent spiritual director, Dubois, said: “Every priest – and I would add every missionary – who makes a good examination of conscience every day will surely become a saint. Someone who neglects this practice will have the same defects all his life long and will never improve.”

I would suggest the Ignatian method of examination: place yourselves in the presence of God, renew your faith and thank God for gifts received; ask for help to understand yourselves thoroughly and in-depth; pray that He make you aware not just of your sins and defects but also of what causes them; examine your thoughts, words, works and omissions; feel sorrow for sins committed; make practical resolutions.

If you have resolved to correct a shortcoming and then fall again do not lose courage but rather begin again. The Lord will bless your efforts. Learn to love the examination of conscience – not just here and now but throughout your life in the missions. If you put these things into practice you will make great progress on the road to holiness.

### Spiritual Reading

**184. Sustenance for life.** By spiritual reading I mean those books of ascetic theology or similar subjects that foster priestly, religious or missionary life. St. Jerome urged Nepotianus never to neglect the practice of reading every day. St. Francis de Sales calls spiritual reading is oil for the lamp of prayer.

Spiritual reading promotes conversion. St. Ignatius was converted through spiritual reading and so was St. Augustine. The tears and pleas of Augustine’s mother did not turn him from a life of worldliness and error; nor did the sermons of St. Ambrose succeed in convincing him. Passion had laid siege to his heart and he continued his life of self-indulgence for years until one day he came across the words of St. Paul: “Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (Romans 13,13-14). This was all he needed to change his life. Simply reading those words put all his doubts to flight.

St. Jerome writes that in prayer we speak to God but in spiritual reading God speaks to us. Before reading anything we should say: “Speak Lord, your servant heareth” (I Samuel 3,10). What we read must take root in our heart. We read not just for information – we read to feed our spirit. We must read with good will and simplicity – and what we read will become life-sustaining. We must learn how to benefit from everything we read. We are like a wardrobe to which new clothes are continually being added. Thus in the missions we will find that we have accumulated a treasure house of useful information. Everything we read should provide us with a thought or insight that merits further consideration.

The Imitation of Christ is a book that has been my life-long companion. I have given away so many copies of this book – but I have always kept and used my own copy. As a seminarian I made a

digest of the book and would read something every morning and then think about what I had read throughout the day. It is impossible to read the Imitation of Christ without being moved. It is full of heart-warming words – for example: “My son you will never be overcome by work undertaken on my behalf;” “Let us be committed to meditating on the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ.”

## **The Sacrament of Reconciliation**

**185. Love for Confession.** St. John writes: “The blood of Jesus Christ purifies us from all sin” (I John 1,7) even our own daily sins “because we all fail in many things” (James 3,2). Let us thank the Lord for this great gift He has given us: Confession. We must learn how to use it to become saints. This sacrament confirms us in righteousness and the purity of our conscience. For Father G. Bruno Reconciliation is an excellent method for making our life ever more pure. In the words of St. Augustine: “If you want health, beauty and holiness – love Confession.” St. John Bosco claims that no other sacrament encompasses so many virtues: faith, hope, charity, humility, etc. Someone who goes to Confession frequently is a more likely recipient of the Lord’s grace.

**186. A Spirit of Faith.** It is extremely important that we make good confessions. The first prerequisite is to approach the sacrament with faith and to see Jesus in the confessor no matter who he is. We must believe that we are making our confession to Our Lord and it is He who says, “I absolve you.”

The second prerequisite is a good examination of conscience. Confess your own real, conscious, voluntary and even insignificant sins and not your scruples, virtues or the faults of others. Our examination must include all our actions, words, thoughts and not just the same two or three things over and over.

**187. Go to the Roots.** In our examination we should investigate the reasons we commit the sins we confess. For example: I have been uncharitable. But I must go further and ask why have I been uncharitable. Because I envy the person I have treated uncharitably. Then I must confess not just the uncharitable act but the envy that caused it as well. We must discover the root causes of our sins. Why after so many confessions and so many resolutions to improve do we find ourselves with the same shortcomings and defects? Because we never got to the root of our problems. We made only a superficial examination that failed to plumb the depths of our heart and discover why we committed sins of uncharitableness and pride over and over. Tear down the wall that conceals the root causes of our passions! Make thorough examinations and detailed confessions.

Then we must feel sorrow and here we often come up short. Since our sins are often trivial we do not really feel any particular sorrow. We need not necessarily feel sorrow but we must certainly want to feel it. Do not brood over past sins however. Once a sin is forgiven forget about it. The Lord should not have to say: why are you still suffering? (Cf. Psalm 4,3). We must understand how important this sacrament is – it is holy and should never be considered a burden.

## **Retreats**

**188. Spiritual Exercises.** The Lord often drew apart to pray and invited the apostles to accompany Him: “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest” (Mark 6,31). He says the same thing to you; you must leave all your concerns aside and retire to the solitude of spiritual exercises. Retreats are a great grace – they are indeed days of grace and health. They are days of peace and grace for which we must be grateful.

Let us prepare ourselves through prayer: often invoking the Holy Spirit to come to our help so that we do not receive God’s grace in vain. To make a good retreat remote preparation is necessary. To

benefit from the grace God may grant you, prepare your spirit, mind and heart before beginning the retreat. Be generous in your preparation; say to yourself: "I want this retreat to be the best one of my life." Be determined right now to deny the Lord nothing.

And what do you do during the days of the retreat? Pray more, pray more enthusiastically, pray well: this is your primary concern. Then there are meditations and times for reflection. The retreat master's talks can help but it is up to you to explore the depths of your heart. We must open our heart and look into its very depths. This requires silence. Not just exterior silence – no words or gestures – but interior silence as well: we cultivate a spirit of recollection. Think about what you have heard, meditate on the words and mull them over in your heart. In short, be close to God and speak with him: just God and your soul – nothing else. The time of a retreat is precious and we must not waste a minute of it. It is not just us speaking to the Lord – He is speaking to us. We must say with Samuel, "Speak Lord, your servant heareth" (I Samuel 3,9). We must listen to what He has to say and be willing to do whatever He tells us.

Examine yourself to determine if you are following the Lord Jesus' example – He is the paradigm of all virtue – does your life reflect His? Everyone should imitate Jesus – but how much more important for missionaries to imitate Him. Above all pay attention to your usual shortcomings – these are the ones we tend to overlook.

Finally we must make practical resolutions on two important matters: our dominant shortcoming and the virtue we most need. St. James tells us that word of God is not just to be heard but to be put into practice. We must not just make resolutions we must carry them out: "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says" (James 1,22). Our resolutions are gifts from God and will bring down blessings upon us. God's gifts increase when we respond to them. Sometimes all we need is determination. The saints were very much like us – they heard the voice of the Lord and gave themselves to Him – in short they responded to His grace. Let this be the same for us!

**189. Monthly Day of Recollection.** It is a day devoted to the "only thing that matters" (Cf. Luke 10,42). It should renew our energy and the resolutions we made during our retreat; we must restore our first fervor. But we must do the monthly day of recollection well. And how do we do this? First of all it should be a day of silence. Not total silence, however: you do not speak to others but you do speak to God. Silence and recollection. Everything you do on this day should be a prayer.

The most important part of this practice is the examination on the subject of your dominant fault and how much progress has been made in the virtue you most need. Our community and our Congregation will be blest if we practice the monthly day of recollection well. It is a holy practice never to be abandoned by our Congregation. I expect it to be a source of great benefit for us and for our apostolate.

## 12 Examples and Intercessors<sup>1</sup>

### St. Joseph

**190.** St. Joseph is the Patron Saint of the Church and as such is the Patron of Mission an essential part of the Church. He is also our special protector – after the Consolata there is St. Joseph. The Gospel calls him “a just man” (Matthew 1,19). After Our Lord and Our Lady he was the most “just” of individuals. He was just in his observance of the commandments and the Law; he was just in what he said, thought and did. Let us ask him to help us achieve the same justice which is in fact holiness. We should be devoted to this great saint. However much we honor him it will never be equal to the honor he received from the Lord who was obedient to him for so many years.

After Our Lady it is St. Joseph who will meet our spiritual and temporal needs. St. Therese wrote: I don’t remember ever praying to St. Joseph for a favor that was not granted.” Don Bosco too used to say: “I have never asked St. Joseph for a favor I wasn’t granted.” When I was a boy Don Bosco used to say to me: “For health and intelligence turn to St. Joseph.” He is a powerful advocate with God, so when you are in the missions turn to him for everything you need – even material needs. We must ask first for spiritual favors and he will see to whatever else we need. Let us pray to him for ourselves, our community, the missions and the whole Church.

To honor a saint it is not enough to pray to him; we must follow his example. St. Joseph is an excellent model of fidelity and the interior life. He did not perform miracles; he did not preach and yet he achieved great holiness by being humble and faithful in little things. Faithfulness in little things – this is the secret of community. I have asked St. Joseph to grant you is unshakeable fidelity: be faithful from morning to evening and never let discouragement overwhelm you. St. Joseph’s life was entirely interior and as such he is the special protector of consecrated persons. If you have trouble praying, meditating or cultivating a spirit of recollection go to Joseph. In the missions your life will be extremely busy; imitate St. Joseph who in the midst of all his work remained close to Jesus and Mary. Their ardor ignited a corresponding flame in his own heart.

Follow the example of his humble, hidden and work-filled life. He worked and supported himself with his own labor. The Lord led him on the common way of work, of hiding and of sacrifice. The difference was St. Joseph worked with spirit. He was devoted entirely to taking care of Our Lord and Our Lady. We must be equally devoted to giving honor to God. He did everything he could to please Jesus and Mary and we must do likewise.

St. Joseph will teach us to love Our Lady and the virtue of chastity. Since the Father entrusted Jesus and Mary to Joseph’s care he must have been very chaste indeed. Let us pray with all our heart: O Joseph, grant that we may live a holy and protected life through your patronage.

Thank St. Joseph for the protection he provides – and not just now while I am still alive and my name is Joseph but even later when I am no longer with you. Devotion to St. Joseph must become “incarnate” in you. After Our Lord and Our Lady comes St. Joseph – we need not look for others.

### St. John the Baptist

**191.** St. John the Baptist is the patron of the diocese of Turin and therefore a feast day for us. Joy

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<sup>1</sup> Because of their commitment to holiness Allamano saw all the saints as examples for his missionaries. Some were more appropriate because of their personal traits and more direct involvement in evangelization made Allamano feel closer to them. In this chapter we will talk about only some of the many saints he spoke about or presented during his formation talks.

St. Joseph Cafasso was one of the principal models he most frequently spoke about. We are not including Cafasso in this chapter however. The reason is that Allamano never made a specific presentation of Cafasso because he had not yet been beatified and there was no liturgical feast. All the same Cafasso’s spirit pervades Allamano’s spiritual teaching – we need only note the many times Cafasso is cited in these pages.

spread among his relatives and family friends throughout the mountain country of Judea at his birth. His father Zachary had gone dumb because he was reluctant to believe what the angel had told him about the baby's birth but once the child was born he regained his speech and sang the magnificent canticle: the Benedictus. In this song he describes his son John as a "Prophet of the Most High" and the "Precursor of the Messiah."

The Baptist's vocation, preparation and apostolate represent a prototype for all missionaries. He was predestined to prepare the way of the Lord, he was given a mission by God: "Sent by God" (John 1,6). He was not like the other prophets who foretold the coming of the Messiah and pointed out the signs of that coming. He prepared souls to receive the Messiah through repentance. When finally Jesus appeared John pointed Him out saying: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1,29) and told his disciples to follow Jesus. After His baptism by John Jesus began His mission on earth.

Through the special grace of God you too have been predestined from all eternity not just to life, not just to Christianity but to the apostolate. For this reason the Lord has given you good health and a heart capable of loving Him and making others love Him too. Thank Him for this predestination! You are not here by accident, the Lord does nothing by chance. He has Himself chosen you to be missionaries and to prepare His way among non-Christian people. You will go before Him with the example of your virtue, with your preaching and with your administration of the sacraments.

How did St. John prepare for his great mission? God sanctified him in the womb of his mother; he was given a special name that means grace; miracles occurred at the moment of his birth. For his part John responded to God's call and prepared for his mission by retreating to the desert and living a life of penance. Your early education came from your parents and now you are committed to preparing for mission through prayer, study and learning self-control.

St. John practiced four virtues that I would especially recommend – they are absolutely necessary for genuine missionaries: penance, chastity, humility and missionary zeal. Above all, penance: St. John left everyone and everything to go into the desert; dressed in camel skins he lived on locusts and wild honey – the bare necessities. You too must prepare yourselves by learning the spirit of penance – not just external penance, but as I have so often said, internal penance as well. You should practice those small mortifications that will be so helpful in the missions.

John the Baptist was chaste – he was a martyr for chastity. He was beheaded by Herod because he defended the integrity of marriage. You too must be pure and chaste and your example will encourage all who approach you to practice this virtue. The witness of your life will inspire good will and respect – it will accomplish enormous good. The Baptist was also humble. When the Lord came for baptism John only consented to baptize Jesus out of obedience. Before the whole crowd he announced that he was not worthy to fasten the Messiah's bootstrap. Once Jesus began His public life, John disappeared: "He must increase and I must decrease: (John 3,30). Missionaries too must be humble. They will accomplish good to the extent that they are humble and see that everything comes from God and not themselves. After his preparation in the desert, John went out to preach, to prepare hearts to receive the Lord. He continued his mission with strength and determination up to his death. So you too have not been called to be Trappists or Carthusians but rather missionaries: to spread the Lord's Kingdom and to sacrifice everything including your serenity for this purpose.

I have on occasion been tempted to stop worrying about you or the priests in the residence and to think only of myself. "No!, No!" the Lord tells me "I want you to make me known through these priests and missionaries. Once you are in heaven you can contemplate Me as you please." Sometimes I close myself in my room and do not answer the bell when it rings. I do this to avoid exhaustion, to avoid spending all my time outside, all my time with others. In short I do what I can.

By leading a life of sacrifice and zeal John the Baptist became a great saint. And now so many centuries later he is still honored while others who made much noise at the time are completely forgotten. Be inspired by his life and strive to excel in those virtues of which he was so shining an

example. It was said of him that he was “a splendid and shining light.” So you too must shine with the love of God and be a light amongst the people.

### **Sts. Peter and Paul**

**192. St. Peter.** He had a vital faith. When the Lord asked his disciples “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” they answered “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” It is alright for others to say this but “who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered immediately: “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” (Cf. Matthew 16,16). What a magnificent profession of faith! Peter proclaimed Him the true Son of God and did it publicly. In return the Lord made Peter the cornerstone of His Church and gave him supreme power to loose and bind on earth.

St. Peter’s faith came to the fore in other circumstances as well. When Jesus promised to give His flesh for food and His blood for drink many were scandalized and abandoned Him. The Lord turned to the apostles and said: “Perhaps you too want to go?” Peter replied: No, Lord. We will stay with You always. “You alone have the words of eternal life!” (Cf. John 6,68). He acted similarly on so many other occasions and showed himself to be among the first if not the very first who possessed so vital a faith. It is true that the Lord predicted Peter’s triple denial but it is also true that Jesus immediately added: “I have prayed for you so that your faith does not fail” (Luke 23,32).

St. Peter was enflamed with love of Jesus. After His resurrection the Lord asked Peter: “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these others?” (John 21,15). Peter remembered his three denials and did not dare to say he loved Jesus more than the others did; all he could say was: “Lord, You know everything. You know that I love you” (John 21,17). Through his own love for Jesus he made others love Him too; this love supported him throughout his apostolic labors up to the day of his martyrdom.

You can see that the defining characteristic of an apostle and a missionary is love for Our Lord. Not a simple, affectionate, sensual love but one that is strong in the midst of suffering. Not the sort of love that lasts only from morning to evening. This was not St. Peter’s love. The Lord demands a strong and constant love from all those who work for the salvation of souls. Each of us ought to be able to say that we love Jesus more than others – or at least we hope to love Him that way. And this is not vanity!

**193. St. Paul.** St. John Chrysostom wrote “St. Paul’s heart was like the heart of Jesus.” A single flame. St. Paul never tired of repeating the name of Jesus in his letters just as he never tired of the sacrifice and work involved in saving souls. “So I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well.” (II Corinthians 12,15). It was this burning love for the Lord that prompted him to become all things to all people – as if he were in everyone’s debt. If you really love you will work. If you are not committed it is because you do not love. Paul had only one motivation for all his work: he loved the Lord and wanted to make others love Him too.

His love was all consuming and led him to exclaim: “Who will separate me from the love of Christ?” (Romans 8,35). No person and no thing could separate him from that love: neither men, nor demons nor angels! And these were not just words: he never lost courage in face of persecution, flogging, stoning, danger on land and sea or the plots of his enemies.

We too do everything to make the Lord glorified and loved by all. This is how our love proves itself – to work and sacrifice for Him; not to allow ourselves to be separated from Him by any temptation, trial or difficulty; to assign all credit to Him and not ourselves. This is the kind of love we should ask of St. Paul: a love that is fervent, active and constant.

Besides his love other of St. Paul’s outstanding traits were his energy, tenacity and fervor. The same tenacity he displayed in persecuting Christians he later showed in proclaiming the Gospel. On the

road to Damascus, “suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? Who are you, Lord? Saul asked. I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting, he replied.” (Acts 9,4-6). Paul replied with the beautiful words: “Lord, what do you want me to do?” It was the same as saying: “Yes, Lord, I recognize you as my God and I give myself totally to you, I am ready to do whatever you want.” Without a thought for flesh and blood he pledged his vibrant personality to the service of the Lord, to spreading the faith. What determination he had! Those who are tenacious do a great deal of good. We need determined people. Be tenacious! Determined people become saints. You can become saints without performing miracles but not without working. Without determination you will accomplish nothing worthwhile in mission. Courage, determination and steely will! To achieve this you have to love the Lord very much indeed and love him with your whole being as Paul did. We should never forget the Apostle of the Gentiles. He is our natural protector and model.

### **St. Ignatius Loyola**

**194.** At the shrine of St. Ignatius there is a statue and at the foot of the statue an angel bears the saint’s arms with the motto: *Ad majorem Dei gloriam*. The saint’s whole life and entire mission are summed up in these words. “Everything for the greater glory of God.” St. Ignatius had no other concern but the glory of God.

He was a missionary, the founder and superior of missionaries; he knew what they needed and he protects them from heaven. Shortly after founding the Society of Jesus he vowed to go to the Holy Land with his first followers so they could venerate the sacred places and preach the Gospel. This proved impossible so he went to Rome to place himself at the disposal of the Pope. He included a “vow for Mission” in his constitutions and sent Francis Xavier and so many others to the missions.

St. Ignatius is a great saint who was determined to become a saint in the midst of so many trials and to found a congregation of religious who were equally determined to work for the glory of God. He was one of St. Joseph Cafasso’s special protectors. Although he was pleased by the good the Society accomplished he said that if it pleased the Lord to suppress the Society he would need only fifteen minutes in front of the tabernacle to accept this with serenity.

What should we do to pay him homage? First of all we should pray to him. When you say that beautiful prayer *Anima Christi*<sup>2</sup> remember that St. Ignatius wrote it. Always say it after Communion. I never forget it. St. Ignatius has written few prayers but the ones he did write are very striking – they are filled with his own fervor.

We must imitate Ignatius: the glory of God, only the glory of God, the greater glory of God. Our only purpose in this world is to know and love God and make others love Him. He created us for Himself; we must seek nothing but Him, His greater glory and the fulfillment of His will. Do everything that pleases the Lord; strive to do not just the good but the better; desire, burn with the desire to see God glorified. St. Ignatius had this fire; the fire of love and the apostolate burned in his heart. Our work must never shame the Lord. St. Ignatius was not a weakling – and I do not want weak people, but cheerful, energetic people that do not burn out. I also expect a will of steel: a readiness to sacrifice oneself; everything we do in the missions must be for the greater glory of God!

### **St. Francis Xavier**

**195.** St. Francis Xavier is the patron of our Congregation. After St. Paul he is the supreme exemplar

<sup>2</sup> The complete prayer is as follows: “Soul of Christ, sanctify me. Body of Christ, save me. Blood of Christ, inebriate me. Water from Christ’s side, wash me. Passion of Christ, strengthen me. O good Jesus, hear me. Within Thy wounds hide me. Suffer me not to be separated from Thee. From the malicious enemy defend me. In the hour of my death call me. And bid me come unto Thee That I may praise Thee with Thy saints and with Thy angels. Forever and ever. Amen” Allamano attributes this prayer to St. Ignatius but it dates from centuries before him.

for all missionaries. Father Pierre Chagnon synthesizes his life in these words: “Everything for God, everything for one’s neighbor and for oneself.”

Everything for God: he went from Spain to Paris and was so diligent in his studies that he became a Master. St. Ignatius also in Paris repeated continually to him: “Quid prodest? What is it all for?” Francis, what is the point of so much learning and honor if you lose your soul? These words launched the process of Francis’ conversion. His heart was true and upright; he struggled and overcame violent temptations; finally he surrendered himself to St. Ignatius and allowed the saint to teach him the ways of God. “What is it all for?” These words produced a saint for God and the Church; these words converted many who were involved in the affairs of this world; these words filled the desert with holy hermits. Francis gave himself to God totally; he was not the sort of missionary who set off with enormous enthusiasm and then faltered and turned back at the first setback. In the face of extraordinary obstacles he stood firm; these obstacles were so great that any one of them would have stopped a giant in his tracks.

From the moment he consecrated himself to the service of the Lord Francis had but one purpose in life: to love God and make others love Him as well. His one goal was to glorify God and have others do likewise. In obedience to St. Ignatius he traveled to India and then Japan – he hoped to go to China as well. He planned to return to Europe to convert lax Christians and then on to Africa before returning to Asia; the reason for all this travel was to win new kingdoms for Our Lord, Jesus Christ. As St. Ignatius taught Francis did everything for the greater glory of God. This is a question we must also ask ourselves, “what’s it all for?” “why did we come here?” We ought to detach ourselves from everything worldly so we can belong totally to God. Pray to Him for your vocation, for the grace to respond to His call without reserve and without faltering. It is not just on those days you feel the Lord is close to you that you will become saints – whether your days are filled with fervor or aridity you should work ceaselessly for the greater glory of God. This is the model we must follow: love the Lord, seek His glory with all possible enthusiasm; repeat the words of St. Paul over and over: “Christ’s love compels us” (II Corinthians 5,14).

Everything for our neighbor: Francis first performed works of charity in hospitals where he performed the lowliest of tasks. He was not ashamed to beg from door to door on behalf of the sick. During his long journey to the missions he distributed the food given him from the captain’s table to the needy. Once he was in the missions he gave himself body and soul to meet the material and spiritual needs of the poor. To accomplish this he endured unheard of deprivations on land and sea, in what he ate and what he wore. He wept when he saw the lengths to which Christians went for the sake of money; he bemoaned the efforts expended in Europe in pursuit of honors and not evangelization.

Everything for himself: that is everything to become a saint. It is so easy to neglect one’s own welfare and spiritual life when overwhelmed with work. In the midst of his countless and pressing apostolic activities he never forgot to pray – he was always faithful to prayer. From time to time he withdrew – as did Jesus – from his outward activities to contemplate his own situation and speak with God. When this was impossible during the day he would spend the night standing in front of the Blessed Sacrament and when fatigue overcame him he would rest on the altar steps. He found the grace to enlighten minds and convert hearts in the Eucharist and the Crucifix. He understood that genuine lasting conversions are the result of God’s grace and not our efforts.

This should be our model! We all admire St. Francis but seldom do more than admire him. Since we have the same religious and missionary vocation why could we not become more like him: saints and men who accomplished good? After the apostles he is considered the greatest missionary. Each of you could become another Francis Xavier; each of you could accomplish the same miraculous conversions. God has not ceased to act in our times – He wants you to be a new Francis Xavier.

Once Francis heard the call to the missions he devoted himself entirely to spiritual preparation for this vocation. One does not acquire virtue in a day. One must persist, resist, struggle and never surrender no matter how great or small the sacrifice.



Francis was so obedient to his superior that at a single word he would have abandoned everything. No matter how lowly if the work is assigned through obedience. Only one thing is important: to do one's duty. Obedience is the daughter of humility. Not false humility – we lose courage because we discover a shortcoming – but genuine humility that prompts us to seek out our own shortcomings. Not the sort of humility that makes us anxious but the genuine humility that helps us persevere and see things from the proper perspective.

Francis prayed and worked, worked and prayed. Prayer without work provokes the Lord; work without prayer does the same thing. Ordinarily the Lord only uses saints to accomplish good; perhaps this is the reason so many missionaries do not accomplish everything they might. First saints and then missionaries or we will be neither the one nor the other. Therefore like Francis Xavier we must be saints; ours must be a special and heroic holiness that is modeled on his life: everything for God, everything for our neighbor and everything for ourselves.

### **St. Teresa of Avila**

**196.** St. Teresa is a great saint. She is an example not just for women but for men as well. Her whole personality exuded love. Here I would like to note that we often identify love with warm feelings – this is not genuine love or rather it is not the totality of love that we owe the Lord. What does genuine love involve? “Love makes us bear all things without tiring; love makes us work without interruption; love makes us eager to be useful.” This is St. Thomas' definition of love. It is not just a question of feelings – one can be absolutely without any feeling whatsoever and still love a great deal. This was the case with St. Teresa. For years she suffered aridity of spirit; she would shake the hourglass hoping to make meditation time pass more quickly. She had the will to love but felt nothing. And yet she was a saint during these periods. It was precisely during these dry spells that the Lord made her a saint. St. Teresa's love of God displayed the three qualities mentioned above that constitute true and solid love.

Bear all things without tiring: love makes us endure whatever suffering we encounter. When she was only seven years old she ran off with her little brother to convert non-Christians and seek out martyrdom. Her uncle met her on the road and made her go home. But still Teresa never abandoned her desire to be a missionary. She prayed and made sacrifices: she was a missionary of desire – the holiness of her life confirmed this. She was a missionary and martyr by desire.

She entered the Carmelites and was determined to persevere regardless of the setbacks she encountered. Leaving the house of her father where she felt so loved caused her so much anguish that she felt her bones were being crushed. She was a woman of determination. Love made her bear all sufferings to become a holy Carmelite. You too must have this same strength of will – the strength to abandon your family, your country and yourselves because you have been called to be missionaries.

To work without interruption: one author says that St. Teresa's heart, tongue or hand were always in motion. She wrote enough to be a Father of the Church. Always in motion, always active. She worked ceaselessly to acquire virtue; she made a vow always to choose the more perfect option for the greater glory of God. To please the Lord and to cause Him to rejoice she would not hold back anything – not even shedding her blood. She suffered a great deal, especially in her work of reforming Carmel. She was a woman of strength, a woman of prayer, action and sacrifice. Contemplation did not keep her from working. Bear in mind her oft repeated motto: “Either to suffer or to die!” There was no middle way for her. She saw this as the only way to be close to the Lord. Lest mortification consume the body one must have spirit and strength.

Eager to be useful: filled with the love of God St. Teresa burned like a bonfire. Her only desire was to love the Lord more – everything else was unimportant. “I can tolerate a heaven where others are more highly placed than I am, but I cannot tolerate a heaven where others love the Lord more than I do.” Once the child Jesus appeared to her at the gate of the monastery and asked her graciously:

“Who are you?” “I am Teresa of Jesus,” she replied. “And I am Jesus of Teresa,” the child said. This is something we would all like to hear – but it would probably make us vain but if we were at the same stage of perfection as Teresa it would not turn our head. This is the reward given to those who truly love the Lord tirelessly, actively and totally.

You know what sort of religious she was – a cloistered missionary. Since she could not go off to the missions she offered herself as a victim for non-Christians. This was the purpose of all she did and suffered. This is the concept of religious and missionary life you must cultivate: not rest but work, not pleasure but sacrifice, not half-hearted religiosity but total, all-embracing holiness. We should imitate her strength and be strong on the rough days and difficult occasions. Remember that our shortcomings will not preclude the Lord’s Grace. St. Teresa used to say: “Who has more defects than I have?” But she never gave up, she trusted in God and succeeded in all her endeavors. Her motto was: “Let nothing upset you, let nothing frighten you!” After a setback she would say “Nunc coepi” now I get up and start again – sometimes even forty or fifty times a day. She would ask the Lord’s forgiveness and say: “the grass in my garden is not well cared for!” She found humility in her shortcomings but never lost confidence. This is how it should be for us: if we are willing to start again and have the strength to make a new beginning we will succeed. Just renewing our intention is pleasing to the Lord.

May the Lord, through the intercession of St. Teresa give us above all a love of prayer – even when we are going through a dry spell; may he give us the determination needed to succeed as authentic missionaries.

### **St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen**

**197.** Our Congregation must foster devotion to St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen. Along with St. Francis Xavier and St. Peter Claver he is our special protector. He was the first missionary sent by Propaganda Fide to work in Switzerland and was Propaganda’s first martyr. A missionary must always be ready for martyrdom, ready to be a victim for the Lord, ready to make any sacrifice.

We have another special reason for devotion to St. Fidelis. It was on his feast day, April 24, 1900, I was celebrating Mass in his honor at Rivoli (Turin) and had placed on the altar a letter written to the Archbishop asking for a definitive word on our missionary Congregation. I got that word. Another reason we should be devoted to this saint is the special love I had for him since I was a seminarian. I am sure that God inspired this love in view of future events.

Have recourse to St. Fidelis to help you in your studies and in your efforts to practice virtue. He will help you overcome discouragement; he will help you control your youthful eagerness to start working in the apostolate. Apostles require lengthy and serious preparation; you need the theological and cultural background that the times and the people to whom we are sent demand. We will need more than ordinary virtue and a genuine spirit of self-sacrifice.

Let us pray to him and take him as our model in the area that was his defining characteristic: faithfulness to his vocation. As a young student and as a lawyer he was faithful to his duties as a Christian; he answered God’s call by choosing the humble life of a Capuchin. He was extraordinarily faithful to the rules of his Order – first as a simple friar and then as a superior. When assigned to the difficult mission in Switzerland he was instantly obedient; he was faithful to this assignment to the point of martyrdom.

This is why St. Fidelis is a model of consecrated and apostolic life. Follow his example and be faithful to your present and future obligations. Your faithfulness ought to be total, heart-felt and simple. Be faithful in both big and little things, in your response to God’s grace and let yourself be formed; be faithful to the rule and the other means God provides to make you successful missionaries if you remain faithful in carrying out your resolutions – in short, you must be faithful in everything; as the Church says in the liturgy: “We too have been found faithful, faithful unto death.” In this way you will receive the reward Our Lord promised to his servant: “Well done, good

and faithful servant; because you have been faithful in a few things I will set you over many” (Matthew 25,21).

### **St. Peter Claver**

**198.** The Church has declared Peter Claver the Patron Saint of all people of African descent: he exercised his ministry among the slaves transported from Africa to Cartagena. For more than forty years he was devoted to their spiritual and physical welfare. He did this work with compassion and perseverance up to the time of his death. If you are to succeed as holy missionaries with the necessary charity and patience you must begin your formation now as young people; these virtues must take root in your soul.

St. Peter Claver was a nobleman with delicate sensibilities. He became a religious in the Society of Jesus and left the family he so loved. After studying theology he asked to become a Brother Coadjutor – giving up the priesthood. His superiors did not grant this request and he became a great apostle. His advisor was St. Alphonsus Rodriguez; St. Alphonsus told him of his future mission.

And how did Peter Claver prepare for this mission? In all the years of his life he never once broke a rule. He said that a good novice must seek God in all things. He must see everything as a stairway that leads to God. The novice must make every effort to practice perfect obedience; he must do everything for the greater glory of God; his only goal should be to save souls until such time he dies on the cross with the Lord Jesus.

### **St. Francis de Sales**

**199.** The feast of St. Francis de Sales was the solemn date of the official approval of our Missionary Congregation (January 29, 1901).<sup>3</sup> This was no accident. In the plans of Providence and quite possibly in the mind of our Archbishop, Cardinal A. Richelmy, the Congregation was approved on this day to place it under the protection of this great saint, the Apostle of Chablais. He was always considered a Turin saint – his mother came here often. He was devoted to Our Lady, the Consolata. He once stayed here at the Sanctuary for three months. He is one of our protectors.

We should ask ourselves how this man accomplished so much good. He was an apostle, the founder of a religious order, a writer and was later proclaimed a Doctor of the Church. We are accustomed to admiring the virtues and good works of the saints but how often do we investigate the source and origin of their holiness? Francis de Sales was not born a saint – he learned how to become one by responding to God’s grace from the very beginning. He struggled to control his short temper. Certainly we admire his good nature – but this was not natural or infused by God – he learned mildness through practice and self-denial. He struggled for chastity – violent struggles in Paris. But he never succumbed to temptation; he resisted and made a vow of chastity. Later he renewed this vow at Loreto. He struggled to follow his priestly vocation and to go to Chablais. No one else had the courage to undertake this difficult and dangerous work. He offered himself to the Bishop and ignored his mother’s tears and his father’s opposition. He set off with nothing, but he had everything – he had God with him.

He wanted at all costs to be the fourth saint named Francis and he succeeded in this. From the very beginning he worked with steely determination: “I will, I will!” He succeeded and this is a precious lesson for us. God grants each of us the grace we need to reach the degree of holiness to which He calls us. If Francis de Sales and so many others could achieve holiness why can’t I? Why not all of us? Being called to the apostolate is already a sign and a guarantee that the Lord will help us become saints. St. Francis de Sales is a modern saint. He may have had more problems than us but he overcame them and became the greatest saint of his era. What he did we too can do.

The diocese of which he was bishop was very poor; friends suggested that he try for a richer diocese

<sup>3</sup> When Allamano said this the feast of St. Francis de Sales was on January 29 and not on January 24 as it is currently.

– Paris for example. He responded, “If you marry a poor woman you don’t abandon her because she is poor.” When the Senate threatened him with the expropriation of his property he simply responded, “Good, then I will be more spiritual!”

During his apostolic life he endured so many sacrifices. There were plots, assassination attempts and slander. He left his very comfortable position as Provost and became a missionary; as a missionary he showed extraordinary zeal – a zeal that manifested purity of intention, a spirit of sacrifice and above all, meekness. He was an authentic missionary and will forever be a protector of our Congregation. Ask him to help you achieve the same spirit of detachment, sacrifice and zeal for the glory of God.

He accomplished so much good because he was humble. “He had a very low opinion of himself,” St. Jane Frances de Chantal writes, “he relished his lowliness; he could not ignore the respect he inspired but it made him blush.” In the preface to the Treatise on the Love of God he wrote: “There are many perfect things in this world but do not look for them in my house.” On his return from Milan he said to the sisters, “I am a ghost, the shadow of a bishop, unworthy to kiss the ground the Archbishop of Milan (St. Charles Borromeo) treads.” We must imitate Francis by rooting ourselves firmly in humility. This virtue guarantees zeal – one seeks not his own ends but only the glory of God.

St. Francis de Sales’ zeal was marked by sweetness and mildness. These virtues are required for missionaries and in this he is our exemplar. He had a fiery temper but still managed to display a mildness that was both admirable and admired.

His mildness was accompanied by a strength that matched it. Remember what he said: “If there was one thing in my heart that was not for the Lord I would rip it out mercilessly.” We may think we are totally devoted to the Lord but if we look in our hearts we discover traces of self-love! Traces of envy, traces of intemperance, traces of luke warmness – sometimes there are traces of even greater shortcomings. St. Francis had but one goal: to please God. He gave his sisters the motto: God Alone.

Let us seek the intercession of this great Saint for the grace to love the Lord with our whole heart and our neighbor as ourselves for God’s sake. These two loves are the source of missionary zeal. Whoever is devoted entirely to God will be rewarded a hundredfold – even in this life. Therefore take courage and be cheerful. St. Francis de Sales was always cheerful: “Serve the Lord with joy!” (Psalm 100, 2).

## **Guardian Angels<sup>4</sup>**

**200.** A healthy devotion to Angels in our Congregation has to be strongly fostered. We are devoted to the Angels for ourselves and for the many others who ignore them. We should be devoted to the angels for the sake of those non-Christians to whom we proclaim the Gospel. We need the help of the angels for this task. The good angels love, care for and watch over us – they promote our welfare.

Holy Scripture has much to say about the angels. We read in the Psalms: “For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways” (Psalm 91,11). In the letter to the Hebrews “To which of the angels did God ever say, Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet? Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? (Hebrews 1,13-14). After warning us not to scandalize children the Lord said: “Do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven” (Matthew 18,10). While exercising their work as guardians they remain always in God’s presence. There are other occasions where Holy Scripture speaks about angels: the

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<sup>4</sup> We include Guardian Angels at the end of this list since Allamano considered them special protectors and guides for missionaries.

stories of Lot, Tobias and Daniel in the lions' den, the three young men in the fiery furnace and St. Peter in prison, etc. (Cf. Genesis 19, Tobias 5; Daniel 3,43; 6,22; Acts 12, 1-11). St. Jerome writes: "How great is human dignity! Every person has his own angel from birth!"

Angels guide and assist us; they offer our prayers and good works to God; they protect us from physical and more especially spiritual danger. Let us thank God for our Guardian Angel who takes such good care of us; let us allow them to guide us. Should we not have recourse to this Angel who is so concerned with our well-being? We need a vibrant faith!

Our duties towards our Guardian Angel involve first of all respect for his continued presence and though we do not see him – we know he is there. We owe him gratitude for his kindness: he does all the good things on our behalf. Trust in his care, turn to him when we are in need and heed his inspiration.

I can never recommend this devotion enough. Some Christians never think of their Guardian Angel. I once urged a sick man to have recourse to his Guardian Angel and he replied "How can I turn to him now when I have always ignored him in the past?" "Do it anyway" I told him. Certainly that unfortunate individual would have been happier had he turned to his Guardian Angel earlier in his life.

Missionaries have special reasons for honoring Guardian Angels. This devotion to the Guardian Angel should be something vital and rooted in their hearts. There are special bonds between missionaries and the angels. Their principal function is to praise the Lord on their own behalf – as His creatures – and for all those who have been entrusted to their protection. Similarly missionaries must live close to God and praise Him continually for themselves and on behalf of others. In the missions you must never forget your duty to praise the Lord on behalf of those entrusted to their care – especially those who do not yet know the Lord. Angels are also the ministers of salvation and this is the whole purpose of your missionary vocation. Your work in the apostolate makes you resemble the angels: your closeness to them prompts them to love and assist you. Therefore you must trust them. You will accomplish great good if you live united in mind and heart with your Guardian Angel.

Devotion to our Guardian Angel must put down deep roots and become a defining characteristic of missionaries. Each of you should say: I have an angel all my own. He is with me always. When the Lord entrusted me to his care He said: "He will go before you and help you always; he is with you, for you and in you; when you struggle he will be there with you struggling and winning; he will be with you inspiring compliance with God's will; he will be your encouragement and assistance."

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Our primary goal is for our members to become saints: 2 – the Congregation is only for those who want to be missionaries: 28 – love for the Congregation: 33 – the Congregation will survive but losing its original fervor would be a disaster: 39 – here everyone works: the Congregation is not a boarding school: 57, 134 – the Eucharist is the heart of our Congregation: 150 – Our Lady has deigned to give her name to our Congregation: 155.

### **Consecrated Life**

Cf. religious vows

Our Congregation is made up of religious and missionaries; being a religious is like undergoing baptism a second time, it is a holocaust, a martyrdom; to be a religious means working towards holiness: 102 – The vows give us greater freedom; our vows are not a contract but a vocation; we are giving God not just the fruit but the tree as well: 103 – We are consecrated to the missions even if it costs us our lives: 104.

### **Consolata**

She is the foundress of our Congregation and is responsible for all we accomplish: 157 – We must think of her as our own because we are her missionaries: 158 – Novena and feast day: our heart tells us what we must do for our Mother: 159 – Allamano's prayer to the Consolata: 160.

### **Constancy**

Useful in missionary work; it is an indispensable requirement for missionaries; parable of the mustard seed (Matthew 13, 31-35); what we can learn from Cafasso: 129.

### **Constitutions**

Be convinced that they reflect God's will for our Congregation; each word was studied and meditated; they are pure gold; each of us must be a living version of the Constitutions: 120.

### **Corpus Christi**

This is a great feast; the prayer "O Sacrum Convivium" : 81.

### **Cross**

Jesus' example; we must ask the Lord for a love of suffering: this is necessary for missionaries; we must begin to bear the cross: 136 – Mortification: 137 – the small sacrifices no one sees: 138.

### **Destructive criticism**

This along with grumbling is an obstacle to the spirit of holiness: 18.

## **Detachment from things**

Necessary in the light of the vow of poverty: 108.

## **Devoted to the Blessed Sacrament**

“I want you to be devoted to the Blessed Sacrament”: 153.

## **Discipline**

Cf. Order

## **Dissipation**

It is an obstacle to holiness: 15.

## **Disunion**

Obstacle to holiness and community harmony: 19.

## **Easter**

The feast of the Lord's and our resurrection: 71 – it is a bearer of peace and joy: 72 – always be cheerful - this will edify your neighbor: 73 – overcome sadness and be always at peace: 74.

## **End of the Year**

Draw up a resumé of the past year in thanksgiving and to highlight what needs improvement: 63.

## **Energy**

Speeds us on the path to holiness; being energetic on our own behalf and on behalf of others; do not lose heart if the work seems too much: 126 – Importance of using time well: 127.

## **Epiphany**

It is the manifestation of the Lord; imitate the Magi's fidelity to their vocation: they were ready and persevering; charity, prayer and mortification are our gifts: 65.

## **Esprit de Corps**

This is required for peace in the community; whatever the cost we must have unity; the goal of our Congregation should be our unifying principle: 133.

## **Eucharist**

Eucharistic spirituality: 146, note 1 – Celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice; Jesus is the Victim: 146 – The Mass is the most beautiful moment of our life; we must celebrate Mass well and with the greatest possible commitment; it is the supreme devotion; we must take part in the Mass with vibrant faith and burning charity; spiritual participation is also praiseworthy: 147 – Jesus is living bread: 148 – how to receive Communion: 149 – Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is our friend; it is the Congregation's principal devotion: 150 – Visits to the Blessed Sacrament; perpetual adoration: 151 – love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament: 152 – we must be devotees of the Blessed Sacrament, especially in the missions: 153.

## **Evangelical Poverty**

Jesus is a model of poverty – he teaches us poverty; poverty gives life to all the other virtues; even charity can depend on poverty: 106 – it determines the quality of a community; what the vow of poverty involves: 107 – it is not poverty in itself that is important but the love of poverty; the virtue of poverty and how we can live it; the help of our benefactors; poverty requires detachment from material things: 108 – take care of everything: 109 – learn how to work with the poor: 110.

## **Examination of conscience**

Effective instrument for conversion; St. Ignatius' method: 183.

## **Faith**

Holiness is based on faith; we are doubly blessed because we believe without seeing: 85 – living by faith means allowing ourselves to be guided by the dictates of our faith; faith is a gift we must ask of God: 86 – a missionary must have so very much faith; one who has faith abandons himself to God: 87 – All our thinking should be guided by faith: God alone; intellectual faith is not enough, our faith must be practical it must dictate our actions: 88 – simple and total faith: do not think too much: 89 – believe what the Church tells us; our Congregation must be attached to the Pope and the Church: 90.

## **Family Feeling**

“How they love one another!”; our charity must be not just spiritual but material as well; compete in helping each other: 134 – Fraternal support (correction) is part of family spirit: 135.

## **Family Spirit**

We are a family; family members confide in each other; family members trust each other: 43 – there must be order in a family: 47 – each of us must become involved: 48 – we must help each other: 56 – we are a family and we must help each other become saints: 120.

## **Fraternal Support**

This is an aspect of family spirit; it should be done with discretion and at the right time: 135.

## **Friendship**

Friendship between God and man is another name for charity: 97.

## **Gentleness**

Jesus is our model: 123 – Necessary in the missions; a missionary who cannot control his temper is a disaster: 124 – Gentleness is a difficult virtue that requires time and effort: 125.

## **Giovanni Semeria**

Brief biographical notes: 35, note 5. His teaching on the need to do God's will: 35.

## **God Alone**

Practical faith, God Alone. Everything of God, from God and in God: 88 – Purity of intention is an act of love by which we attribute everything to God alone: “My God and my all;” strive to keep our intentions pure: for God alone! To God alone be the honor and glory: 99 – Do everything well without expecting recognition from others: God is enough; keep our eyes fixed on heaven; our goal is there; God alone: 100 – every time pride rears its head we must say immediately: God alone, God alone”: 145.

## **Good Manners**

Good manners are always necessary – even in the apostolate; they are linked to charity; review your conduct often: 50.

## **Guardian Angels**

Our Congregation must foster devotion to the Holy Angels; Scripture passages that speak of Angels; trust and allow oneself to be guided; missionaries must cultivate special devotion to angels: to praise God and be ministers of salvation: 200.

## **Hail Holy Queen**

This is an especially devote prayer with rich theological content: 168.

## **Hail Mary**

This is the greatest of all Marian prayers; say it often and with fervor: 167.

## **Heaven**

The thought of heaven must be with us constantly as it was with the saints (Cafasso, Francis of Assisi, John Bosco); it will help us acquire virtue: 92.

## **Holiness (becoming a saint)**

God wants us to be saints: 1 – The primary goal of our Congregation is the sanctification of our members: 2 – First saints and then missionaries: 3, 195 – The pursuit of holiness is the Congregations proper goal; we must aim at genuine holiness: 4 – Becoming a saint by doing ordinary things well: 5 – Holy missionaries are the real evangelists: 7 – Holiness is the source of happiness: 8 – Be courageous and take the first step: 9 – With regard to holiness there are three types of people: 10 – A firm will and the proper disposition to become saints: 11 – Trust in God – this is the secret of holiness: 12 – Someone striving for holiness trains his personality: 13 – Unauthentic motivation can block our path to holiness: 14 – Dissipation blocks holiness: 15 – Lukewarmness undermines holiness: 16 – Indecision is another obstacle to holiness: 17 – Destructive criticism and grumbling undermines our path to holiness: 18 – Discord makes holiness and difficult and undermines community: 19 – Stubbornness and attachment to one's own ideas makes holiness hard to achieve: 20 – Venial sins undermine our efforts at holiness: 21 – Holiness is based on faith: 85.

## **Holy Spirit**

Cf. Pentecost

## **Hope**

Hope too is necessary for holiness; the saints (Augustine, Cafasso) have taught us this; our hope must be alive and it will overcome all doubt and fear: 91 – Keep the thought of heaven in mind: 92 – Strong hope is called confidence and everyone needs it; it allows us to derive good from all things: 93 – Hope leads us to loving trust: 94.

## **Humility**

The basis of obedience: 119 – Jesus is the model of humility and we must follow His example: 141 – We need humility because of our defects; it must be present with every other virtue; we need humility to pray: 142 – Humility is necessary for missionaries because they are servants of their vocation; our Congregation must practice humility: 143 – Humility is truth: 144 – Humility must be achieved and practiced constantly; Allamano did not want his hands kissed: 145.

## **Immaculate Conception**

This is a mystery full of joy and beauty: 161.

## **Indecision**

It is an obstacle to holiness: 17.

## **Jesus**

To follow Jesus is our ideal: 15 – Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus: 62 – Presentation in the Temple: 66 – Passion and Death: 69 – Sacred Heart of Jesus: 82 – Jesus as Victim: 146-147; Jesus as living bread: 148-149 – Jesus, God with us: 150-153.

## **Knowledge (study)**

Missionaries need not just holiness but knowledge as well; an ignorant missionary is a monument to sadness; the need for knowledge is evident from Holy Scripture; St. Francis de Sales thought of it as the eighth sacrament; a missionary without knowledge is a burnt-out

lamp: 52.

## **Lent**

This is an excellent time for conversion, penance and prayer: 67 – Praying Psalm 50 – the Miserere: 68.

## **Liturgical Year**

Understand and take part in it: 59.

## **Love**

Cf. Charity

Love for our superiors and formation directors is shown through our confidence in them: 43 – Love of God and love of neighbor always go together; someone who does not love his neighbor cannot be a missionary; for a priest everything leads to love of neighbor; do not judge rashly; do not grumble: 130 – Love one another like brothers and sisters; all founders recommend mutual charity: 131 – Love your neighbor and put up with each other's shortcomings; you must be of "one heart and one soul": 131 – The signs of fraternal charity are: to delight in each other's good fortune and happiness; to suffer with those who suffer, to bear each other's burdens, to forgive offences and make up with others: 132 – To have esprit de corps, to foster charity: 133 - Family spirit: 134 – Fraternal support: 135.

## **Lukewarmness**

A lukewarm person cannot become a saint; characteristics of lukewarmness: 16.

## **Missionary candidates**

Quality rather than quantity usually; having many unqualified missionaries does not work: 45 – Do not be too eager to go off to the missions; your preparation for the missions should be thorough and carried out with calm and patience: 46.

## **Missionary Formation**

The seminary is the place for formation: 39 – Take advantage of your formation period: 39 – The formation you undergo was inspired by the Lord: 40 – Cultivate the spirit of our Congregation in your thoughts, words and actions: 41 – Superiors and formation personnel are sentinels appointed by God for your training: 42.

## **Missionary Vocation**

A missionary vocation derives from love of God: 23 – It belongs to those who love the Lord and want to make Him known to others: 24 – It is a gift of God: 26 – The ordinary indications of a missionary vocation: 27 – The Congregation receives only those who have a missionary vocation: 28 – It is a great gift of God: 29 – We must know how to respond to our missionary vocation: 30 – It is the most beautiful of vocations – we must respect it: 32 – Love our own vocation: 33 – Attachment to our own will can be an obstacle to the response to our vocation: 35.

## **Modesty**

Modesty embraces our whole outer being; we acquire this virtue through practicing the presence of God: 51.

## **Month of Mary**

Revere Mary and grow in love for her; we must imitate her virtues; this is the best possible form of devotion: 170.

## **Monthly Retreat**

This is a praiseworthy practice but it must be done well: 189.

## **Msgr. Lorenzo Gastaldi**

Brief biography: 42, note 2, note 13 – Urged superiors to use charity and correction: 42.

### **Mortification**

Mortification of the senses is necessary to safeguard our chastity: 114.

### **New Year**

Begin the New Year with good will and commitment; live the year as if it were the last one of your life; make a list of what you hope to accomplish and strive to achieve your goals: 64.

### **Nunc Coepi**

- “Now I begin again”: 30 – Expression of confidence: 93 – the example of St. Teresa of Avila: 196.

### **Obedience**

This is the most excellent of the vows; Jesus gives witness to this; the saints taught this virtue; obedience can perform miracles: 115 – It is an absolute necessity in a religious community because it fosters a common purpose; obedience in all things; it is a defining characteristic of Consolata Missionaries: 116 – Obey the superior as you would the Lord – for supernatural reasons: 117 – Quick, heartfelt, simple obedience in all things: 118 – Three degrees of obedience: carrying out an order, willing what is commanded, full acceptance of this decision: 118 – “blind” obedience sees much!: 118 – learn obedience through the practice of humility: 119 – obey the Constitutions as if they were God speaking to us: 120.

### **Order**

Promotes formation; it fosters agreement and the common good in a community: 47 – cultivate a love of order and not just simple observance of the rules: 49, 51.

### **Ordinary Life**

It is the workshop of holiness: 5 – We must do good well: 6.

### **Our Lady (the Blessed Virgin, Mary)**

She is the Queen of missionaries; devotion to Our Lady is an absolute necessity: 154 – Ad Jesum per Mariam: the value of devotion to Our Lady: 155 – One can never be too devoted to Our Lady; Marian devotion of the saints: 156 – The Consolata: 157-160 – Mary Immaculate: 161 – Presentation of Mary in the Temple: 162 – the Annunciation: 163 – the Visit to St. Elizabeth: 164 – Our Lady of Sorrows: 165 – the Assumption: 166 – Hail Mary: 167 – Hail Holy Queen: 168 – the Rosary: 169 – the Month of Mary: 170.

### **Our Lady of Sorrows**

Allamano’s special devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows; consoling Mary makes her “The Consolata”; what the saints teach about this devotion: 165.

### **Passion and Death**

Be devoted to the Passion of Jesus; meditate on it often: 69 – be devoted to the Crucifix: it is a book to read and contemplate; we will become saints through the Cross: 70.

### **Passion for the Missions (fervor, zeal)**

Apostolic fervor should move us even to give our life; it is the defining characteristic of a missionary – it is the goal of his life: 121 – we must have fire if we are to be apostles; we are alive to the extent that we work for the love of God; fervor must always be accompanied by intelligence; we must persevere: 122.

### **Patience**

This virtue is indispensable for a missionary; teaching of Scripture; it tempers the sadness of current misfortune, both internal and external: 139 – various degrees of patience; do not complain, resign yourself to God's will and put up with misfortune cheerfully; patience is needed everywhere: 140.

### **Pentecost**

The feast of the Holy Spirit and a "Second Easter"; the Church is born at Pentecost: 76 – To know, love and follow the Holy Spirit; obstacles to His Descent: 77 – the hymn Veni Creator Spiritus: 78 – the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit: 79 – we are temples of the Holy Spirit; "I want you all to be sons and daughters of the Holy Spirit!": 80.

### **Personality**

No particular personality precludes the pursuit of holiness; one must be trained: 13.

### **Prayer**

Pray always, never tire; prayer is necessary if we are to live well, the teaching of the saints: 175 – The more work you have the more you ought to pray; Cafasso's teaching; love prayer: 176 – Prayer must be confident, humble and persevering: 177 – Liturgy of the Hours: 178 – Daily meditation: you must be convinced of its importance and necessity; various methods of meditation: 179 – Vocal prayer at intervals throughout the day: 180 – To pray always there must be a spirit of prayer: 181 – Live always in the presence of God like Noah who "walked with God"; live, breathe, lose yourself in God ...: 182

### **Presentation of Mary in the Temple**

This feast originated in the East: it is a feast for novices – one offers oneself to the Lord: 162.

### **Priest**

The priest is by his nature a missionary: 25.

### **Proper Vocational Goal**

We are in this Congregation to be missionaries: 31.

### **Protectors (Models)**

Cf. 190, note 1.

### **Providence**

We must abandon ourselves to God, to Providence; we must cultivate trust in Providence and earn its assistance: 94 – Trust in Providence even when faced with the enormous expenses of the missions; get busy: 95.

### **Religious Vows**

With our vows we are not entering into a contract but following a vocation; the vows increase our freedom: 103 – Vows belong to missionaries; we must serve the missions even if it costs us our lives: 104.

### **Responding to our vocation**

The importance of our response: 30.

### **Retreats**

Like Jesus, we too must draw apart; we must prepare ourselves with prayer; retreats should be made in silence; examine our lives and our intentions: 187.

### **Rosary**



The excellence of this prayer: it is both a vocal and a mental prayer; the repetition is characteristic of love: 169.

### **Sacrament of Reconciliation**

We must love the sacrament of confession: 185 – We must make our confession with a spirit of faith: 186 – We must discover the root of our sins; we must be sorry for our sins: 187.

### **Sacred Heart of Jesus**

This is a continuation of the feast of Corpus Christi; the two feasts complement each other; we understand better Jesus' love for us; consecration of our Congregations to the Heart of Jesus: 82 – Seek refuge in Him and you will overcome temptations against chastity: 114.

### **Sacrifice**

You must be capable of making small daily sacrifices and persevering in this; examples of sacrifice: 138.

### **St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen**

He is a special protector of our Congregation; he was the first missionary sent out by Propaganda Fide; he preached the Gospel in Switzerland and was martyred; pray to him for the grace of being faithful: 198.

### **St. Philip Neri**

His trust in God: 12.

### **St. Teresa of Avila**

Determination to become a saint: 11 – The essence of her holiness was love; love helps us endure suffering; it works ceaselessly; Teresa was a genuine cloistered missionary; we must imitate her strength and her readiness to begin again (*nunc coepi*): 196.

### **St. Therese of the Child Jesus**

At the age of 24 she was already consumed with the love of God: 98.

### **St. Peter**

A man of faith and love for Jesus: 192.

### **St. Peter Claver**

A Jesuit and apostle of the slaves at Cartagena (Colombia); he prepared himself for his mission with a holy life: 198.

### **St. Paul**

St. Paul's heart was like the heart of Jesus; he was a model of energy and tenacity: 193.

### **St. John the Baptist**

Patron of the diocese of Turin; a model for missionaries; like him we must prepare for our mission with penance, chastity, humility and missionary zeal; he was very humble; the quest for solitude: 191.

### **St. John the Evangelist**

Recommended mutual charity continually: 131.

### **St. Joseph**

Patron of the Church, the missions and our Congregation; he was "just" i.e. "holy"; he was venerated by the saints; a model of fidelity, interiority and humility: 190.

### **St. Ignatius Loyola**

His motto was “For the greater glory of God”; he was a founder of missionaries; imitate his apostolic zeal: 194.

### **Sensitivity**

Cf. Good Manners

### **Simplicity**

Simplicity makes the soul incapable of guile or deceit; it presupposes sincerity: 44.

### **Sin**

Willful venial sin leads to lukewarmness and places an obstacle on the path to holiness: 21.

### **Spirit of Congregation**

Cf. Missionary Formation

The spirit of the Congregation must inspire your thoughts, words and works: 41.

### **Spirit of Prayer**

We must pray always: 181.

### **Spirit of Sacrifice**

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### **Spiritual Reading**

It promotes conversion; strive to imprint what you read on your heart; the Imitation of Christ: 184.

### **Strength**

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Life in the missions requires a high degree of strength; train yourself for this beginning during your formation period; woe betide the lazy!; the teaching of St. Francis de Sales: 128.

### **Study (knowledge)**

The need to study languages; a knowledge of languages is a sign of a missionary vocation: 53 – Study for the missions with humility, enthusiasm and devotion; example of the saints: 54.

### **Superiors (formation personnel)**

They are guards set by God for your training; it is the duty of a superior to pray for his confrères; a superior must be present and must correct: 42.

### **Temptation**

Anything that leads us to sin; they remind us of the need for perseverance: 22 – We must overcome temptations and trials if we are to be faithful to our vocation: 38.

### **Time**

Use it well; Cottolengo’s example: 127.

### **Trinity**

The foundation of our faith; the sign of the cross; everything comes from and returns to God; the whole year is a feast of the Holy Trinity: 58.

### **Visitation to St. Elizabeth**

Mary gives an example of service, she brings Jesus to others and gives praise to the Father with her Magnificat: 164.

## **Will**

We must have a strong, energetic and unflagging will to become saints: 11 – We must be constant in our determination to follow our vocation; Camissasa is an example of tenacity and constancy: 34 – We must not bring our own willfulness with us to the missions; we must know how to renounce our own will: 35.

## **Will of God**

Always be one with the Will of God: 74 – We love God by carrying out His Will always; we must seek the Will of God alone; to do the will of God is a source of consolation; keep your eyes fixed on high; our goal is there: God alone: 100.

## **Word of God**

God's heart abides in His Word; the early Fathers of the Church had only Scripture: 171 – God's Word is useful, living and warm; reading Holy Scripture promotes love of God; example of the saints: 172 – read and study the Word of God with a prayer and a pure life: 173 – the Bible is our Book and it must occupy a place of honor in the Congregation: 174.

## **Work**

Work, even manual labor, is a defining characteristic of missionaries; it is not just a duty but an honor as well; examples from Scripture and the lives of the saints: 55 – it helps us support ourselves; it is always helpful to learn a trade: 57 – work like poor men, materially poor men: 110.

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- Hebrews: 1,14 (200); 7,25 (75); 10,38 (86); 11,6 (86); 12,2 (137).
- James: 1,4 (139); 1,22 (188); 2,20 (88); 3,2 (138, 185); 3,5 (138).
- 1 Peter: 2,2 (89); 2,23 (123); 4,3 (140); 4,8 (134); 5,8 (22).
- 1 John: 1,7 (185); 2,2 (146).
- Apocalypse: 3,15-16 (16); 12,1 (166).

# GENERAL INDEX

*Presentation*

*Biographical Profile of Joseph Allamano*

*Allamano's Chronology*

*Introduction*

## **1 MISSIONARIES, YES BUT SAINTS AS WELL**

### **Holiness and the Missions: the Congregation's goals**

This is God's will that you be saints  
Embrace the Congregation's goal.  
First saints and then missionaries.  
Haphazard holiness.  
The extraordinary in the ordinary.  
To do good well.  
To evangelize with holiness of life.  
Saints are happier.  
Take the first step – courageously.  
To be practical.

### **Attitudes on the path to holiness**

Total, forceful and constant will.  
Trust in God.  
Training our character.

### **Obstacles on the path to holiness**

Inauthentic motivation  
Dissipation.  
Lukewarmness.  
Indolence.  
Destructive criticism.  
Disunity.  
Obstinacy.  
Venial Sins.  
Temptations.

## **2 LOVED AND CALLED**

## **The Missionary Vocation**

Loved from all eternity.  
Love of God and a passion for souls  
A priest is by nature a missionary.  
The missionary vocation is a gift of God.  
Without extraordinary signs.  
Only for evangelization.

## **Response to Our Vocation**

If only you knew what a gift God has given you  
To respond appropriately.  
The right intention.  
Respect.  
With real love.  
A firm will.

## **Obstacles to cooperation**

Attachment to one's own will.  
Attachment to possessions and comfort.  
Attachment to relatives.  
Trials and temptations.

## **3 FORMATION FOR THE MISSIONS**

### **Missionary Formation**

Formation here and now.  
The spirit of our Congregation. completely must begin now and not waste time.  
In thought, word and deed.  
The leadership of your superiors and those charged with your formation  
With an open and trusting heart. ...  
In simplicity and sincerity.  
Quality.  
Don't rush your departure.

### **Formation for an ordered life**

Involvement and collaboration of all.  
It's up to me as well.  
Not only maintain but love discipline.

Good manners and sensitivity.  
Mastery of self and modest behavior.

### **Study and work formation**

The need for knowledge.  
Language study.  
Study for the missions.  
Work, duty and honor.  
Helping each other.  
Providing support.

## **4 THE MYSTERIES OF SALVATION**

### **The Foundation of our faith: the Holy Trinity**

The Liturgical Year  
Advent  
Christmas  
The Name of Jesus  
Year's End  
New Year  
Epiphany  
Presentation of Jesus in the Temple  
Lent  
Passion and death  
Easter – the Resurrection  
Ascension  
Pentecost  
Corpus Christi  
Sacred Heart of Jesus  
Feast of All Saints  
All Souls

## **5 THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES**

### **Faith**

Doubly blessed.  
Living by faith.  
On the missions.  
Practical faith.



A simple and total faith.  
Guidance of the Church.

### **Hope**

Open our hearts to hope.  
Eyes fixed on heaven.  
A storehouse of confidence.  
Everything is in God's hands.  
Trust in Providence.

### **Charity**

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.  
Love as friendship.  
Love God ardently  
To grow in love  
To will what God wills  
The mission is entrusted to the one who loves much

## **6 RELIGIOUS VOWS AND MISSIONARIES**

### **Consecrated Life**

A new baptism.  
In freedom.  
For the missions.

### **Evangelical Poverty**

"I have given you an example"  
A life of virtue.  
The strength of a vow.  
What poverty requires.  
Take care of everything.  
Work like poor men.

### **Chastity for the Kingdom**

Be chaste.  
Priests.  
Virtue of the heart  
Treasure in vessels of clay

## **Missionary Obedience**

A habit for all  
Fundamental virtue  
Supernatural virtue  
Universal, prompt, heartfelt and simple  
Learn Obedience  
Obedience to the Constitutions

## **7 MISSIONARY PERSPECTIVES**

### **Passion for the Missions**

Even sacrificing one's life.  
To be apostles we need fire.

### **Gentleness**

Jesus is our model.  
Necessary in the missions.  
Work with all our heart.

### **Energy and Constancy**

Forge ahead enthusiastically.  
Value time.  
A high degree of strength.  
Constancy.

### **Love like a family**

A big heart.  
Love each other like brothers and sisters.  
Signs of fraternal charity.  
Esprit de corps.  
Family spirit.  
Fraternal Promotion

### **Love of the Cross and a spirit of sacrifice**

Especially as missionaries.  
Mortification is not old fashioned.  
The little sacrifices no one sees.

### **Patience**

Indispensable in the missions.

Degrees.

### **Humility**

Jesus was the only truly humble one.

Humble perforce.

To serve with humility.

Humility and truth.

Humility is not infused.

## **8 THE EUCHARIST: A MYSTERY OF FAITH AND LOVE**

### **Jesus the Victim**

Celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

The most beautiful moment of our life.

### **Jesus living bread**

Come and eat my bread.

You have called me and here I am!

### **Jesus: God with us**

As a friend

Willingly in His presence.

Make the Lord our own.

Especially in the missions.

## **9 ALL GENERATIONS WILL CALL ME BLESSED**

### **Cooperating with Jesus**

Queen of all missionaries.

Ad Jesum per Mariam.

We can never be too devoted to Our Lady.

### **Sons and daughters of Our Lady, the Consolata**

The apple of her eye.

Ours in a special way.

Novena and Feast of the Consolata

Giuseppe Allamano's prayer to the Consolata

### **Marian Mysteries**

The Immaculate Conception.  
The Presentation of Mary in the Temple.  
The Annunciation.  
The Visit to Elizabeth  
Our Lady of Sorrows.  
Assumption.

### **Marian Prayers**

Hail Mary.  
Hail Holy Queen  
The Rosary.  
Month of Mary.

## **10 OUR EYES FIXED ON THE LORD**

### **Word of God**

God's heart is in His Word.  
The Word of God is useful, alive and heart-warming  
Reading and studying Sacred Scripture.  
Our book.

### **Prayer**

Pray always without tiring.  
The more work you have the more you should pray.  
The Lord will not give us stones for bread.  
Praying the Liturgy of the Hours.  
Meditation warms the heart.  
Milestones during the day.  
A spirit of prayer.  
In the presence of God.

## **11 WALKING IN THE SPIRIT**

### **Examination of Conscience**

Knowing Ourselves.

### **Spiritual Reading**

Sustenance for life.

## **The Sacrament of Reconciliation**

Love for Confession.

A Spirit of Faith.

Go to the Roots

## **Retreats**

Spiritual Exercises.

Monthly Day of Recollection

## **12 EXAMPLES AND INTERCESSORS**

**St. Joseph**

**St. John the Baptist**

**Sts. Peter and Paul**

St. Peter.

St. Paul.

**St. Ignatius Loyola**

**St. Francis Xavier**

**St. Teresa of Avila**

**St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen**

**St. Peter Claver**

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