

MISSIONARY EDUCATIONAL METHOD OF BLESSED JOSEPH ALLAMANO



as it emerges from the IMC Major Seminary's Diaries
(by Fr. F. Pavese, IMC)

I

(from "Da Casa Madre", January 2011)

In all the issues of "Da Casa Madre" of the year 2011 I will present some elements of Bd. Joseph Allamano's missionary educational method as they emerge from the diaries of our major seminary that were written during his life. It is a rather new approach, but I think it is worthwhile...

The diaries speak of Fr. Allamano's presence

I would like to make it clear that my purpose is not to talk about our Founder's educational method in itself, but about his educator's personality as it emerges from the diaries of the major seminary of our Institute.

Let me state what I intend to do.

We know that, from 1901 to 1909, our candidates to mission were living at our first Mother-House, the "Consolatina", in "Corso Duca di Genova" (now "Corso Stati Uniti"), where they were prepared for mission before their departure. In October 1909 the Mother-House was transferred to the new building in "Via della Circonvallazione" (now "Corso F. Ferrucci").

Fr. Allamano was regularly going there from the Consolata Shrine, in order to meet his young men. His presence in the Mother-House was guaranteed in regard to both "quantity" and "quality". The young men who were living there did not feel they were separated or far from him. This was his conviction, expressed with rather firm and clear words: "It is only me and the ones I entrust with guiding you whom you must listen to [...] In our Institute, the form is the one which our Lord inspired and is still inspiring to me" (IMC Conf I, 15). There is no doubt that Bd. Allamano wanted to be faithful to the original inspiration received from the Holy Spirit, and wanted to pass it on in an authentic way, so that it would become the charism of our Institute.

I will try to understand and describe the influence that Fr. Allamano's presence had on his young missionaries, and also how his presence was perceived and received by them.

As a source for my work, I have chosen our Institute's "Major Seminary's Diaries". They are 14 exercise books, hand-written by various people, preserved in our IMC General Archives; each of them describes concisely the daily life of the Mother-House's community during a school-year.

However, even if the exercise books are 14, the years covered are only 12, because 2 of them consist of repetitions... The first one covers the year 1908-1909, that is the last year at the "Consolatina", while the last one covers 1919-1920, six years before Fr. Allamano's death.

It seems to me that the time covered by these exercise books is enough to give a sufficiently exact idea of our Founder's personality as an educator, and of the young men's capacity to understand and receive him. These twelve years, after all, are a "peak time" in Fr. Allamano's life as a man and a priest in the fullness of his maturity, from 57 to 69 years of age.

The diaries are characterized by vivacity, directness, and immediacy. Usually they are very concise. They tell what is essential and, at times, not even this. When reading them, however, one has the impression of living in that community, participating, in some way, in their events. Particularly, one becomes convinced that, for those first confreres of ours, our Founder was truly the most important person. Their personality was gradually growing, but always starting from him.

Fr. Allamano was educating them while living at the Consolata Shrine

As Fr. Allamano was living at the Consolata Shrine, it comes natural to ask, "What method was he using, as an educator, to offer an adequate preparation for mission to young men with whom he was not living? What kind of 'presence' was he offering to his young men?" We could define his method as a "method of meetings". Obviously, in what follows, I will be limiting myself to the meetings with the community, because the contents of individual/personal meetings was not recorded. So, we will be talking about a missionary educational method as it emerges from Fr. Allamano's meetings with his young sons.

From the seminary's diaries, it appears that Fr. Allamano's presence was "spontaneous", i.e., not always regulated by fixed dates and occasions, even if it was also orderly and methodical. By the young men it was desired and perceived as "formative". It was, therefore, an enriching presence, participated and efficacious. There has never been any negative comment or any complaint about the fact that he was not living in the Mother-House.

Some of the meetings were regular, part of the time-table. The Sunday ones, those for spiritual retreats, religious professions, Ordinations, departures for missions, etc. were practically always held. Other meetings depended on various circumstances, in regard to both content and frequency and, therefore, were more spontaneous. Some of these took place also outside the Mother-House: at Rivoli, or at the Consolata Shrine, St. Ignatius' Shrine, etc. In the following reflections, I will try to explain what kind of meetings they were: when and where they were held, the contents they offered, how they were perceived by the young men, what kind of atmosphere was reigning among the participants, etc.

The value of this source (i. e. of the diaries)

I would like to make another point. Those who wrote the diaries did not certainly intend to write about educational methods. They related the life of the seminary as they were able to do. The massive presence of our Founder is realistically found in those hand-written pages, because it was a fact and it was, furthermore, pleasing and liked. I chose the diaries in order to reflect on Fr. Allamano's educational method for the very reason that they are free from any preconceived notion. For the very reason that they did not intend to explain our Founder's educational method, they are a valuable source about it.

As I mentioned, I will rely mostly on our Founder's meetings with the community of young men. I will try to discover his attitudes, spirit, and proposals, as well as the response the young men managed to give. As these meetings were very frequent, we may reasonably assume that they are valid in order to understand the mutual relationship between Fr. Allamano and his young people.

The diaries are reporting events; consequently they are "limited": usually they do not report the reactions and the interior attitudes of people. For this reason, as I read the diaries' reports, I will

keep in mind other sources, especially the three volumes of Fr. Allamano's Sunday "Conferences", and sometimes also his letters, and testimonies about him.

As an example

To conclude this introduction, I am reporting a passage from the diary of 26 October 1909, taken from the beginning of the second exercise book. It speaks about Fr. Allamano's presence in the new Mother-House, soon after its inauguration. I am quoting from this, because I consider it a bond between the two periods: the one spent at the "Consolatina" (1901-1909) and the one lived in the new Mother-House (from 1909-1920). From these few lines, we can clearly see how Fr. Allamano intended to act, and how his young men agreed with him.

"Since we are in the new Mother-House, our Very Rev. Rector very seldom fails to visit us every day, generally from 5.00 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. He spent the first two days here, almost all the time, and slept here two consecutive nights. As he did this also at other times, we will mention only the days in which he will not be present with us" (Ex. Book 2, p. 1). The last words say it all: the writer felt that there was no need to mention the Founder's presence in the Mother-House, because it was so habitual!

II

(from "Da Casa Madre", February 2011)

"THE USUAL CONFERENCE OF OUR REV. RECTOR"

FROM THE SEMINARY'S DIARIES

THE FORMATIVE VALUE OF FR. ALLAMANO'S SUNDAY 'CONFERENCES'

Every Sunday, Fr. Allamano used to go to the Mother-House and give a talk ["conferenza" in Italian] to his young missionaries. The subjects he dealt with were varied: he either commented on the Word of God proclaimed in that Sunday's Liturgy of the Mass, or he talked about the Mysteries celebrated in the main seasons of the Liturgical Year, or willingly commemorated the feasts of Saints who were models of life for him, or also presented a topic purposely chosen to form his young men for mission.

Fr. Allamano practically talked to them about all Christian virtues, and particularly about those which were more directly related to a religious, priestly and missionary vocation.

To know the contents of Fr. Allamano's educational method, one should examine his letters, and particularly the collection of his "Conferences" (talks) given from 1902 to 1925. It is better to do this by always starting with his own hand-writings, which present his genuine thinking. Obviously valid are also the notes taken by his listeners, even if these should always be filtered out, keeping in mind the personalities of the people who took the notes while our Founder was speaking.

Normal meetings. I would like to stress that these meetings were considered as "normal" events, that is, not "extraordinary". They were the ordinary way used by Fr. Allamano to educate his young men. In fact, in the diaries they are mentioned as "the usual talk by our Rector", or "Our Rector comes at the usual time", or "Everything as usual", "The usual conference by our Very Rev. Rector". This adjective, "usual", somehow impresses, because it is used very many times. The diaries' writers, however, used it as the more correct word to indicate the "normality" and the "constancy" of our Founder's presence among them. And, here, a characteristic of Fr. Allamano's educational method immediately appears: he was not a wise master, detached from his disciples; he was a loving

and close father who accompanied his sons' steps, so that they never felt they were alone. They somehow knew that they were walking together with him.

Often the diaries indicate also the subject Fr. Allamano dealt with. Obviously, due to their outline form, they only mention the name of the subject, or little more. From the collection of his "Conferences", it is easily seen that what the diaries report is always correct. Here are two examples. On 9 November 1913, in the diary we read: "Sunday time-table. At 6.00 p.m. conference by our Ven[erated] Rev. Rector on fraternal charity, patience with one another, mutual correction of defects." The title of that Sunday's conference from the Collection is "Fraternal Charity" (IMC Conf I, 611-613). On the following Sunday, the diary reports, "Sunday time-table. At 6.30 (p.m.) conference of our Ven. Rev. Rector, in which he starts explaining the articles of our Constitutions; this time he focuses on the Title and on Chapter I". The Conference from the Collection gives as a topic for that Sunday: "Constitutions: primary purpose" (IMC Conf I, 614-521).

As time goes by, at times the diaries do no longer even mention the Rector's presence, as it is considered so usual, although from other sources we know that he had gone to the Mother-House and given the usual formative talk. In the diaries we find general mentions, like "Usual Sunday time-table" or something similar, and this includes everything. It is clear that the diaries' writers felt that the Founder's presence among them was such an obvious thing that there was no need to mention it every Sunday. Here again are two examples. On 6 February 1920, the diaries do not report the Founder's presence and talk, but we know from the Collection of his "Conferences" that he talked about "Apostolic Virtues" (IMC Conf III, 394). On Sunday 15 February 1920, the diaries are silent again, but from the Conferences' Collection we know that he talked about "Lent and Charity" (IMC Conf III, 395-399).

Thus, Fr. Allamano appears above all as an educator distinguished by the regularity of his meetings with his young men. This regularity, together with the witness of his life, rendered his talks convincing. Here are, among others, the impressions of Br. Benedetto Falda, a young man at that time, who later became an outstanding missionary: "Especially on Sundays, he was all for his sons [...] His conferences did not resemble lectures in the least: there was nothing formal or stiff; he was a Father who, in the midst of his children, whom he wanted near him, especially the Brothers, was just having a conversation with us. It was advice, which was almost whispered in our ears and remained impressed in our hearts, and so we became imbued with his spirit." (Testimonial, 28 January 1928).

Dynamic meetings. What emerges from the diaries is not only the regularity and normality of Fr. Allamano's meetings with his young men who were preparing for mission, but also how they were taking place. From various details, it appears that Fr. Allamano did not simply give a talk; he was enriching his subject with apparently insignificant details which, however, made the meetings more lively and above all created a family atmosphere, favourable to formation. For instance, he usually read, at the beginning or at the end of a talk, some letter(s) from the missions or, during the war, from some confreres in the army. And I would like to mention here specifically two things: a short homily in English given by a Theology seminarian, and the festive moments.

Short homily in English. Beginning in 1913, Fr. Allamano introduced a new practice: before he began his talk, he wanted that one of the young men gave a short reflection in English on the Word of God proclaimed on that Sunday. It was a way of accustoming his future missionaries to prepare homilies centred on Holy Scripture, as he himself used to do, and also a stimulus to study English, a language useful in the East African missions. It is first mentioned in the diary of 19 October 1913: "Time-table. At 6.30 (p.m.) conference by our Rev. Rector, during which the seminarians who have completed the 3rd year of English give, in turn, a short homily in English on the Epistle (First Reading) of the day. Today this was done for the first time."

During certain times of the year, e. g. the long holidays, it was not easy to prepare the reflections in English and, therefore, they were omitted. On 30 May 1915, we read in the diary: "Sunday time-

table. Today there is no English homily in the evening. Our Rev. Rector gives a talk on the Most Holy Trinity, whose solemnity is celebrated today. From now on there will be no more English homily during this [academic] year" (Ex. Book 7, p. 38). Obviously, as soon as possible they were resumed. In fact, on 21 November 1915, we read: "Sunday time-table. Conference by our Rev. Rector on Prayer. Before the conference, English homily: we resume it" (Ex. Book 8, p. 15).

The Sunday meetings were also made lively by festive moments. Fr. Allamano seems rather concerned about making use of all occasions to create a festive atmosphere of family joy. There were never big things, but small signs of serenity and sharing. In his sensitivity, this was not only a way of offering a break to young men seriously committed to study, work and discipline, but also a way of helping them assimilate more easily the demanding principles of missionary life which were proposed during the conferences. I would also like to mention that, from the diaries, it appears that these moments were not really exceptional. It seems that Fr. Allamano had an ability to create them. Here are some examples, among others. On October 1910: "Sunday time-table. At our meeting the Very Rev. Rector distributes 'marons glaces' (candied chestnuts), on the occasion of the 45th anniversary of his reception of the clerical cassock (2nd Sunday of October 1865) and of the 30th anniversary of his entrance as a Rector at the Consolata Shrine (3 October 1880)" (Ex. Book 3, pp. 7-8). On 21 January 1912: "Sunday time-table. After the conference, the Very Rev. Rector distributes cookies which had been given him for his birthday" (Ex. Book 4, p. 19). On 2 June 1912: "Sunday. At the Rector's conference, distribution of cherries and sweets [to honour the newly ordained priests]" (Ex. Book 4, p. 38). On 21 May 1916: "Sunday time-table. In the evening, conference by our Rev. Rector, held in the courtyard for the first time this year. Some letters from our confreres in the army were read, and the first cherries from our garden were distributed" (Ex. Book 8, p. 40).

Fr. Allamano, therefore, was attributing to the community meetings a particularly formative value. This is why he was so regular and constant in punctually going to the Mother-House, and was striving to create a favourable atmosphere of family communion. It is not surprising, therefore, that his young men desired those meetings and eagerly awaited the Sunday afternoons to listen to their Father's words.

III

(from "Da Casa Madre", March 2001)

"HOW MUCH DID WE DESIRE THOSE MOMENTS!"

FROM THE SEMINARY'S DIARIES

THE YOUNG MEN'S REACTIONS TO FR. ALLAMANO'S CONFERENCES

The Sunday meetings with Fr. Allamano were certainly desired by his young men. Let me begin with a fine testimonial of a man who had regularly attended those meetings, by which he was helped to become a first class missionary, Fr. Vincenzo Dolza: "His zeal for our formation and sanctification was manifested above all by his wonderful Sunday 'conferences'. [Fr. Allamano] used to arrive smiling, sit down, remove a note (from a pocket of his): and we remained enchanted by listening to his words. How much did we desire those moments that were always too short for us!" (Testimonial, 16 February 1945).

Following the diaries, I will express this atmosphere of great delight by stressing two aspects: the names by which the diaries' writers called Fr. Allamano, and their great care and regret in mentioning when he was compelled to be absent.

Signs of reverence and filial love. The adjectives used to qualify Fr. Allamano express not only a sense of respect and reverence -- an obvious thing to be expected -- but also something more than that. The young missionaries appreciated him very much and sincerely loved him, so that he, as a person, was eagerly awaited and, consequently, his conferences were. For an educator it is important to be able to establish such a relationship with the people entrusted to his care. It is an indispensable condition for influencing positively their life. It is especially important for a "Father" such as Fr. Allamano felt he was and wanted to be considered by his "sons". Here, then, are the words used in the diaries about Fr. Allamano.

"Veneratissimo Signor Rettore" (in Italian). This "Very Venerated Rector" appears as the most frequent way to mention him in the first years of our Institute. The word "Rector" was the usual term by which Fr. Allamano was known in all places, including our Institute. He himself, when he was confirmed as Superior General in the General Chapter of 1922, stated that he did not want to use the word "Superior" for himself, but it was to be used for his successors (cf "Da Casa Madre" 7, 1923, p. 50). This is confirmed by the diaries, in which Fr. Allamano is never called "Superior", while this term is used several times for Fr. T. Gays, who was the local superior of the Mother-House. The adjective "Very Venerated", united to "Rector", says it all by itself with no need for comments. It is a superlative that indicates respect and reverence, but also esteem and affection, all in a superlative degree!

"Veneratissimo Padre" (in Italian): "Very Venerated Father" is another expression which appears later in the diaries to indicate a growth in the relationship between Fr. Allamano and his sons, and this not only at the level of words. On 7 April 1919, we read: "Monday. Towards evening, the bell calls all of us together. Our Rev. Rector blesses the small statue of O. L. Consolata which finally went back onto its little throne. Some recommendations from our Very Ven. Father, a hymn is sung, and the little function ends" (Ex. Book 12, p. 21). No longer "Rector", but Very Venerated "Father"!

"Amatissimo Padre" (in Italian): "Beloved Father": with this expression the diaries record another degree of growth in the profound relationship between father and sons. On 22 August 1919, we read: "(At St. Ignatius'). At about 10.00 a.m., we joyfully welcome our beloved Father, accompanied by Rev. Fr. Ferrero. After meals, he lovingly talks with us about the conferring of knighthood on six of our missionaries, and the oncoming Ordination of three of our seminarians" (Ex. Book 13, p.4). On 28 August 1919: "Friday. [...] After lunch, all the young men warmly thank our beloved Father, who is ready to leave, for his pleasant and very loving staying with them. Around 4.30 p.m., we accompany him as far as Lanzo where, after receiving his fatherly blessing, with great regret we say 'good-bye'" (Ex. Book 13, p. 5). Fr. Allamano is a "beloved" Father. I have already mentioned the profound sense of fatherhood which Fr. Allamano felt, and on which he built his formative relationship with his young men: "I tell you what I feel" (IMC Conf III, 595); "I tell you everything, like the father of a family" (IMC Conf II, 111). These are very meaningful words of his. More than a doctrine, he was communicating his experience of life. And his sons were aware of it.

It should be noted that, in mentioning Fr. Allamano, the diaries' writers mix the terms with much spontaneity. For instance, on 26 October 1919: "Sunday. We resume the habit of giving, in turn, an English Sermon on the Epistle of the day. In the evening, after his usual conference, the 'amato Rettore' (Rector whom we love), wearing a surplice and stole over his cassock, assisted by our Rev. Fr. Superior [Fr. T. Gays], blesses the new electric lighting system" (Ex. Book 13, p. 15).

"Venerato Fondatore": "Venerated Founder". In the end, I mention a text, which I found isolated, dated 1 November 1919: "Saturday. Feast of All Saints. [...] Solemn Vespers and Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament with Litany and Tantum Ergo sung by sopranos, tenors and bass. In the absence of our Venerated Founder, Fr. Superior [Fr. T. Gays] holds the conference, making us enthusiastic about our vocation" (Ex. Book 13, pp. 19-20). Finally also the truest term to qualify Fr. Allamano appears: "Founder". It is not easy to find it in the diaries, because Fr.

Allamano did not want it to be used for him, stating decidedly that the "true Foundress" was O. L. Consolata.

When Fr. Allamano could not go to the Mother-House. I have already stated that Fr. Allamano greatly utilized the Sunday meetings for the missionary formation of his young men, distinguishing himself by his constancy and punctuality. However, at times, there were serious reasons which prevented him from going to the Mother House on Sunday: either because he was not in Torino, or because he was sick, or also because of very bad weather, etc. What I want to stress here, in order to make clear how much the young missionaries desired those meetings and, consequently, how much they influenced them, is the fact that Fr. Allamano's absences are never left untold. From what it is written, it is also possible to understand the young men's regret. Generally the diaries' writers simply state: "The Rector cannot come", showing that there was no need to give the reason why, because it was so evident that only a really serious reason could prevent our Founder from being with his young men on Sunday afternoon. However, at times also the reason is mentioned. I will report some examples, choosing from those which show also how the community tried to make up for the Father's absence. The formation aspect somehow had to be there.

Simply, "He cannot come". On 24 October 1915: "Sunday time-table. [...] In the evening, our Ven. Rev. Rector cannot come; so, instead of the usual conference, our Rev. Prefect reads some letters from our confreres in the army" (Ex. Book 8, pp. 10-11). On 27 August 1916: "Sunday time-table. [...] There is no conference by our Rector. Consequently, the time is used in reading some letters from our confreres in the army. (Ex. Book 8, p. 59).

"Because he is sick". On 20 May 1909: "Ascension Day -- Sunday time-table. We meet in the hall (our Very Rev. Rector is not here, because of severe migraine): we read from "Missioni Cattoliche" about the new Blessed Martyrs of Vietnam, and from "Vera Roma" about the two martyrs who were canonized today. Then, refreshments with two pieces of pastry each and some drinks" (Ex. Book 1, pp. 87-88). On 23 January 1916: "Sunday time-table. Our Very Rev. Rector is not coming this evening, because he is quite sick. We read two letters from Africa" (Ex. Book 8, p. 24).

"Because of bad weather". On 13 March 1910: "Sunday time-table. Our Rev. Rector, still not quite well, cannot come because of bad weather. Our Rev. Assistant goes to him" (Ex. Book 2, p. 27). On 23 November 1913: "Sunday time-table. At 6.00 p.m. talk in English; then, as our Ven. Rev. Rector cannot come because of very bad weather, our Rev. Prefect reads, for about an hour, some Italian short stories" (Ex. Book 6, p. 14). On 14 January 1917: "Sunday. Because of a heavy snowfall, our Rev. Rector cannot come. Reading of letters [from missions]" (Ex. Book 9, p. 15).

"Because he is not in Torino". On 12 July 1914: Sunday time-table. Our Ven. Rev. Rector is not here, because he is at St. Ignatius'. Therefore, after Benediction, we have some recreation and, then, our Rev. Prefect reads two letters from missionaries who left recently for the missions, in which they describe their journey from Massaua to Mombasa" (Ex. Book 6, pp. 48-49). On 30 March 1919: "Sunday time-table. There is no conference by our Rev. Rector [who is in Rome for the Beatification cause of Ven. Cafasso]" (Ex. Book 12, p. 18).

I must add that Fr. Allamano himself tried to make up on his own for his Sunday's absences by, for instance, going to visit his young men soon after his return to Torino. These "unplanned" visits to the community are very numerous: too many to be counted. Later, we shall talk about them, because they also constituted times of authentic formation.

At this point, I want only to state that the Sunday meetings were not only desired and waited for by the young men, but they were also very effective for their formation. The two testimonials below clearly express what the diaries make us understand only implicitly: "Those who were fortunate to listen to him are unanimous in saying that, after each conference, it became spontaneous to repeat, together with the disciples of Emmaus, 'Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?'" (Fr. L. Sales, Biografia... p. 234); "At the end of his

conferences, we felt the need to go and stay with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and ask Him for the grace to succeed and be holy missionaries" (Fr. V. Sandrone, Memories).

IV

(prepared for "Da Casa Madre", April 2011)

"FIRST SUNDAY: 'MONTHLY RETREAT'"

FROM THE SEMINARY'S DIARIES

FR. ALLAMANO'S PRESENCE DURING SPIRITUAL RETREATS

Another occasion, when Fr. Allamao's presence in the community was guaranteed, was the time for Spiritual Retreats. Every month, usually on the first Sunday, the community gathered together for a retreat, called "Monthly Retreat" [same as "Monthly Day of Recollection"]. Every year, before the beginning of the academic year, the retreat lasted several days and consisted in a short course of "Spiritual Exercises" [same as "Annual Spiritual Retreat"]. There were also other retreats on the occasion of Religious Professions or Ordinations; these were not for the whole community, but only for the few people concerned. As it appears from the diaries, Fr. Allamano was always present in the community during retreats. During the Monthly Retreats, he himself used to present a topic for meditation, usually at the time for the evening conference. For the Annual Retreats, instead, he used to invite other preachers, usually two: one for the "meditations" and the other for the "instructions". He used to intervene with practical and appropriate suggestions at the beginning, often in the middle, and always at the end, when he was asking the young men to write their resolutions on a small sheet of paper, give it to him and, then, receive it back from him with appropriate comments and encouragement.

If Fr. Allamano has been admired as an educator for his faithfulness to the Sunday conferences, he has been admired as much, if not more, for the way in which he was close to his young men during the important times of their preparation, such as the Spiritual Retreats. In order to understand his educational method on the occasions of spiritual retreats, one should refer to the volumes of his "Conferences". In this regard, I would like to mention that the first time he intervened, as reported by the first volume of the "Conferences", under the date of 1 December 1901, the topic he dealt with has as a title, "Short talk on the Monthly Retreat", and begins with these words: "What is the Monthly Retreats -- Its importance -- How to do it" (cf IMC Conf I, 4-6).

How he intervened in the Monthly Retreats. The way we could call "classic" of making a retreat on the first Sunday of the month consisted of times of prayer, reflection, silence, examination of conscience on the past and practical resolutions for the future. Fr. Allamano wanted his young men to follow this method, consecrated by a long tradition. From the diaries, no other habitual method or form of retreat appears. They generally, more or less, report as follows. On 7 February 1909: "(First Sunday) -- Monthly Retreat -- Sunday time-table -- After Benediction, walk in the courtyard in silence -- Meeting with our Very Rev. Rector -- At 7.10 (p.m.), study, etc." (ex. Book 1, p. 62). On 5 March 1916: "Sunday time-table. Monthly Retreat. Walking in silence and, then, conference by our Ven. Rev. Rector" (ex. Book 8, p. 29).

Fr. Allamano very seldom was absent from Monthly Retreats. When this happened, the diaries report it with very little explanations (if any). For instance, on 5 July 1914: "Sunday time-table. Monthly Retreat. [...] Our Ven. Rev. Rector is absent, because he is already at St. Ignatius" (Ex.

Book 6, p. 47); or on 4 May 1919: "Sunday. [...] Monthly Retreat. Instead of our Rev. Rector's conference, we retire to our study room [...]" (Ex. Book 12, p. 25).

Excepting his few absences, Fr. Allamano used to guarantee not only his presence, but also the offering of very relevant topics for reflection. Unfortunately, the diaries either do not mention the topic proposed by Fr. Allamano, or give only its title. It would be interesting in these cases to check the collection of the "Conferences". However, let us be satisfied with considering how certain topics are mentioned. From what is written, we can also somehow understand, at least a little, the degree of understanding and participation of the community.

Here are some examples. On 7 December 1913: "Sunday time-table. Monthly Retreat. In the evening, our Ven. Rev. Rector, after the English homily, continues to explain our Constitutions, word by word, always in Ch. I" (Ex. Book 6, p. 15). On 1 February 1914: "Sunday time-table. Monthly Retreat [...]. At 6.30 p.m., homily in English, followed by the conference of our Very Ven. Rector. He exhorts us to console Our Lord during these days of Carnival, especially through the practice of mortification and a great love for Our Lord. Then, he reads some letters he received from Africa, one of them, long and quite interesting, from Fr. Prina" (Ex. Book 6, p. 24). On 6 June 1915: "Sunday time-table. Monthly Retreat. [...]. At 6.30 (p.m.) conference by our Ven. Rev. Rector on the Most Holy Eucharist and on the S. Ceremonies" (Ex. Book 7, p. 40).

At times, the diaries add some curious news. For instance, on 4 June 1916: "Sunday. Monthly Retreat. [...]. In the evening, conference by our Ven. Rev. Rector about the Holy Spirit. N.B.: beginning today, in Italy, we shift the clock one hour ahead. Like all other people, we have to accept the new 'legal time' [now called 'daylight saving time', contrasted with the 'solar time'], and so we arrange our time-table according to it" (Ex. Book 8, p. 42).

We should also notice something particular. During the Monthly Retreat on the first day of January, each year, Fr. Allamano used to propose a Saint as the special Patron for the new year, and to talk about his virtues. I will give you only two examples. On 1 January 1914: "(Thursday). Monthly Retreat. Sunday time-table [...]. At 6.30 [p.m.], conference by our Ven. Rev. Rector who presents to us our Patron for the new year, St. Ignatius Loyola, and the special virtue to practise during the year, energy, doing everything 'ad majorem Dei gloriam'" (Ex. Book 6, p. 21). On 1 January 1916: "Saturday. Sunday time-table. [...]. In the evening, conference by our Ven. Rev. Rector on 'thinking about death', as a preparation for the retreat of tomorrow. Our Patron Saint for the new year is St. Francis of Assisi, and the special virtue is poverty" (Ex. Book 8, p. 22).

Some more details. At times Fr. Allamano modified the retreat's programme, either because there were urgent works to do, or because of some celebrations. We can see that he was an educator who did not allow a plan to constrain him: he was faithful to the substance, but free in regard to the form. Here are some examples, among others. On 6 December 1908: "(First Sunday). Monthly retreat. (After breakfast, many of us prepare small boxes or 1 Kg. packets of coffee to give our more generous benefactors). In the evening, the boxes were lined up like a semicircular wall behind the chair of our Very Ven. Rev. Rector, who was very happy about it and, at the end, blessed them. During the evening meeting, several letters from Africa were read, together with an article by Gustavo Pievi, M.P., published on the "Momento", which included sincere and high praises of our Missions and missionaries. Our Rev. Rector said that, small as we were, we did not deserve such praises; the glory for all that had been done was due to God. Then he briefly reminded us of the nature and purpose of the Monthly Retreat" (Ex. Book 1, p. 42-43).

On 7 May 1911: "Patronage of St. Joseph -- Sunday time-table with Monthly Retreat. During the day, we continue to set in order the house, and especially the Museum, for the visit we expect this evening. -- At 5.30 [p.m.] the Precerutti family arrives, whose youngest son had received his First Holy Communion in the morning, at the Mass celebrated in the Consolata Shrine by our Rector (joyful welcome) -- Solemn Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament by our Rev. Rector, -- athletic display in the hall, after which our visitors leave, and we eat the cake they have brought, together

with a glass of wine -- At 7.45 [p.m.], Visit, etc. After supper, recreation in silence" (Ex. Book 3, p.35).

On 1 May 1919: "Sunday. Monthly Retreat. Solemn day of the crowning of our 'Madonna' [statue of Our Lady]. After Vespers and the function of the scapulars, our Rev. Rector, wearing surplice and stole over his cassock, as we joyfully sing the Magnificat, goes up to crown our 'Madonna'. A photograph is skilfully taken by our seminarian M. Borello. Hymns and poems follow; then a bonfire is made with all the letters from our members in the army, among the universal joy of all of us. A petition 'pro barba' [in favour of the beard] was humbly presented, with a very happy result" (Ex. Book 12, pp. 28-29).

How Fr. Allamano intervened in the yearly Spiritual Exercises [Annual Spiritual Retreat]. As I have already said, Fr. Allamano used to invite to direct the yearly Spiritual Exercises only priests whom he personally knew and appreciated because of their doctrine and quality of life. He himself, however, guaranteed a discreet presence of his own, especially at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end, in order to encourage his young men. The diaries punctually report this. We should also keep in mind that, after a certain growth of our Institute, at the end of the Exercises, there were some functions, proper to our Institute, such as the reception of the clerical cassock or religious habit, or Professions, obviously presided over by Fr. Allamano.

I am reporting here only three examples from one course of Spiritual Exercises which will show how he intervened in them. On 3 October 1916: "Time-table of Spiritual Exercises. In the evening, after the meditation, our Rev. Rector speaks to us for a while, stressing the need for perseverance in order to use well the last days of the Exercises" (Ex. Book 9, p. 2). On 5 October 1916: "Our Rev. Rector speaks to us for a few minutes about the way of making resolutions" (Ex. Book 9, p. 5). On 7 October 1916: "[...] At 6.50 [a.m.], Mass by our Rev. Rector, accompanied by harmonium. [...] At 10.00 [a.m.], concluding talk of the Exercises. Immediately after it, there is the reception of the clerical cassock by ... [names are given]. Our Rev. Rector gives a short talk on the duties of seminarians; then, we recite the 'Te Deum', sing the 'Ave, Maris Stella' [Ave, Star of the Sea], and have Benediction. We sing a hymn; then we have recreation" (Ex. Book 9, p. 5).

I would like to mention also the interesting example of 1 September 1919, which is concluded by note relevant to our history: "Tuesday. Last day of our Spiritual Exercises (excellently directed by Fr. Paleari and Fr. Chiesa, his nephew). At 9.00 [a.m.] there is the temporary Profession of our seminarians Maletto and Ogge', and the reception of the religious habit by ... [names are given]. At 4.30 [p.m.] there is the reception of the clerical cassock by ... [names given]. During the very short conference by our Rev. Rector, he spoke to us about the arrival of Rev. Fr. Gays in the near future, the appointment of Rev. Fr. Gallea as Vice-Superior, of Fr. Albertone as Novice Master, and of the Sub-Deacon M. Borello as Assistant for the seminarians. The priests are called 'Fathers'" (Ex. Book 13, pp. 8-9).

V

(prepared for "Da Casa Madre", May 2011)

"OUR LADY CONSOLATA"
FROM THE SEMINARY'S DIARIES
FR. ALLAMANO'S SPIRITUALITY AND EDUCATIONAL METHOD
IN REGARD TO THE B. V. MARY

Fr. Allamano not only lived personally a tender Marian devotion, especially to O. L. Consolata, but was also able to infuse it into his young men. The seminary's diaries make this evident, as they

punctually report how he intervened in the main occasions related with devotion to the B. V. Mary. What is only mentioned in the diaries could be confirmed and elaborated from the collection of his "Conferences". Fr. Allamano's spirituality and educational method in regard to the B. V. Mary is quite rich.

To consider this aspect, I will make use of the occasions which are most evident in the diaries: the month of May, the feast of O. L. Consolata, the Assumption, Immaculate Conception, and other Marian feasts.

The month of May. In Fr. Allamano's time, the month of May was particularly emphasized in our Institute, and was celebrated with special activities, above all the "fioretti". These were special commitments proposed in order to honour Our Lady and to grow in the spiritual life: not only privations and mortifications, but also positive actions, centred on charity and on faithful fulfilment of one's duties. The diaries do not report the contents of these "fioretti"; they simply say that they were distributed at the beginning of May and then collected at the end of the month in order to burn them in honour to Our Lady. From what is written, however, it is possible to get an idea of spiritual vitality.

Here are some examples about the beginning and the end of the month of the B. V. Mary.

About the beginning, on 30 April 1911, we read: "In the evening, our Very Rev. Rector, after having spoken about the Month of May, distributes the 'fioretti' to the brothers and to the other young men (two separate small batches)" (Ex. Book 3, p. 5). On 30 April 1916: "Sunday time-table. In the evening, conference by our Very Rev. Rector on the B. V. Mary and the Month of May. At the end we draw the 'fioretti' for the month of May" (Ex. Book 8, p. 37). On 30 April 1918: "Opening of the Month of May. Toward evening, all of us gather in the Chapel, where our Rev. Rector speaks to us for a few minutes about the virtues of Bd. Joseph Cottolengo, our Patron for this year, whose feast is celebrated today. Then, as usual, there is the distribution of the 'fioretti' and a short talk about the Marian Month" (Ex. Book 11, p. 25).

The closing of the month was also celebrated. On 31 May 1912, we read: "Closing of the month of the B. V. Mary -- At 6.45 (p.m.), Rosary, Benediction by our Very Rev. Rector (with singing of 'Te Deum' and 'Tantum Ergo') -- Singing of a hymn -- Offering of our hearts to the B. V. Mary" (Ex. Book 4, p. 38). When Fr. Allamano could not be present, he wanted somebody to take his place, because the month of May had to be closed in a way appropriate to its importance. For instance, on 31 May 1918, we read: "Friday. Closing of the Month of May, characterized this year by the offering of two silver hearts to Our Lady (one for the seminarians, the other for the other students), containing the written resolutions that each one has determined to practise in honour of the B. V. Mary for a year, until the new Month of May. Since our Very Rev. Rector could not come, Fr. Gallea speaks, on our Rev. Rector's behalf, to the whole community gathered in the Chapel, explaining the reason and the symbolic meaning of our new offering, and exhorting us to be faithful during the whole year to the resolutions that have been undertaken" (Ex. Book 11, p. 29).

Feast of O. L. Consolata. We know how much and in what ways Fr. Allamano spoke to his missionaries about O. L. Consolata. He considered himself to be her "treasurer" and "secretary", and his sons to be the "apple" of her eyes! His expressions of tenderness in this regard are innumerable, as innumerable are also his invitations to celebrate with fervour her Novena and her Feast on 20 June.

With a few rare exceptions, Fr. Allamano was so tied up at the Shrine, both for the morning celebrations which began very early and for the late afternoon procession, that he had to forget about being present in the Mother-House. However, a way for Fr. Allamano and his Family to live together the feast of O. L. Consolata was soon found: if the father could not go to his children, let the children go to their father. In this way, the missionary family could celebrate together, as it was right, the feast of O. L. Consolata, their "Foundress"!

The diaries usually do not speak about Fr. Allamano's presence in the Mother-House on 20 June; however, they always mention the two "pilgrimages" of the community: in the morning in order to participate in the Mass celebrated by the Archbishop, and in the evening for the procession. There are many examples, all similar to one another; I like to quote two of them, because they contain curious news of very different kind. On 20 June 1910: "Feast of O. L. Consolata. [Nothing is said about Fr. Allamano. Their going to the procession in the afternoon is mentioned.] -- N.B.: At lunch: appetizers of salamis and ox-tongue; then fried chicken with green beans and peas; then roast-beef and sauce; then cake and wine" (Ex. Book 2, p. 40). On 20 June 1914: "Saturday. Feast of O. L. Consolata. [No mention of Fr. Allamano, but the two visits to the Shrine are mentioned.] -- Due to bad weather, there is no procession; instead at 6.00 (p.m.) there is the Rosary in the Shrine; then His Eminence [the Cardinal] gives a talk; finally Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament" (Ex. Book 6, p. 45).

For the exterior preparation of O. L. Consolata's feast, the young men were very busy. At times the diaries mention this, as on 17 June 1911: "[No mention of Fr. Allamano] [...] In the afternoon, intense preparation for the illuminations, both here and at the 'Consolatina'" (Ex. Book 3, p. 41).

The Novena was also very warmly recommended by Fr. Allamano. On 10 June 1915, we read: "Time-table. At 7.00 (p.m.) our V. Rev. Rector gathers us together in our study-room and speaks to us about the Novena to O. L. Consolata which begins tomorrow, and also about the feast of the S. Heart which will be celebrated tomorrow" (Ex. Book 7, p. 41).

Assumption of the B. V. Mary. Generally Fr. Allamano celebrated the feast of the Assumption at the Shrine of St. Ignatius, where his young men were for their summer holidays. At times he went there purposely from Torino, in order to be present. In 1925 he could not go there, and regretted it very much. He said it explicitly in a letter to his young men, as if apologising for not being with them: "I can see how vividly you desire that I be with you for the solemnity of the B. V. Mary. This would also be all my delight. I have been doing it for many years!... And I am really *lost* without you... But, my dear people, the years are going by and the weaknesses are increasing... and one cannot do any longer as he would want. Let all of us, you and I, make this sacrifice in honour of our dear Mother. However, I will be with you in spirit [...] and I will be living there with my heart, and you will feel my presence!... [...] I bless you" (Lettere X, 377).

Here are now two examples of celebration of the solemnity from the diaries.

First at St. Ignatius': "Thursday, 15 August 1918 -- Assumption of the B. V. Mary -- In church: at 6.45 [a.m.] community Mass celebrated by our Very Rev. Rector, accompanied by harmonium; at 10.00 [a.m.] solemn Mass celebrated by Fr. Gallea and served by our seminarians; at 12 noon today, like yesterday, festive ringing of bells; at 4.30 (p.m.) solemn Vespers, presided by Fr. Cavallo; at 5.15 (p.m.) solemn Benediction by our Very Rev. Rector. Outside, the Sisters, always very kind, offer us a large dish of raspberries. After Benediction, all of us go to the Pillar [of Our Lady] where, within an hour, we sing 10 hymns; finally a short talk by our Very Rev. Rector concludes the joyful day which, as he said, the departing missionaries should always remember" (Ex. Book 12, p. 2).

The second example, an exception, is about the feast celebrated in Torino with those who had remained there because of the war. It was 15 August 1915: "Sunday. Assumption of the B. V. Mary. All of us are in the Mother-House to celebrate the Assumption. After Benediction, our Very Rev. Rector blesses the new small statue of O. L. Consolata, placed on a pedestal under the porches. Then there is a 'conference', during which letters from our confreres in the army and from those in Africa are read. From today onwards, until there will be peace, every evening, before evening prayers, we shall pray the 'Hail Mary' 3 times in front of O. L. Consolata's statue under the porches, and then we shall sing 2 verses from a hymn" (Ex. Book 7, p. 52).

Immaculate Conception. Also for this feast there were very warm feelings. The diaries mention it practically every year. Here are two examples. On 8 December 1909 (Feast of the Immaculate

Conception): "[after 4.00 p.m.] we go to the 'Consolatina' where our Very Rev. Rector is waiting for us; we sing the [Loreto] Litany by Barbieri, a Gregorian hymn ('Virgo pulcherrima, etc. '), the 'Tantum Ergo' with tenors, sopranos and bass by Perosi, and finally the 'Laudate Dominum' also by Perosi. We stay a few more minutes in the hall where we are given one sweet each; we go back home by 6.30 [p.m.]" (Ex. Book 2, pp.12-13). On 8 December 1915: "Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Sunday time-table. [...] At the end of the Rosary, our Ven. Rev. Rector, wearing surplice and stole over his cassock, gives the clerical cassock to our students of the 3rd and 4th year: 15 of them altogether. They will wear it on Sundays and other feast-days. Then our Ven. Rev. Rector gives a short talk on the meaning of what has been done. [...] Later there is a 'conference' by our Ven. Rev. Rector on the Immaculate Conception and, at the end, sweets are distributed" (Ex. Book 8, pp. 17-18).

Generally the feast of the Immaculate Conception was preceded by a Novena. Fr. Allamano habitually encouraged to live it fervently, by offering practical proposals. For instance, on 28 November 1916, we read: "Tuesday. Instead of the usual Spiritual Reading, our Rev. Rector came to our study-room and briefly spoke to us about the oncoming Novena to the Immaculate Conception. As a common practice to be observed by everybody during the Novena, he proposes to abstain from any deliberate venial sin" (Ex. Book 9, p. 10).

Other Marian feasts. Very seldom Fr. Allamano let a Marian feast go by without mentioning it. In the diaries, besides those already mentioned, we find other Marian celebrations which the community was invited to live with fervour. For instance, on 14 April 1916, we read: "Time-table. At 7.30 [p.m.] in the Chapel, our Ven. Rev. Rector speaks to us about Our Lady of Sorrows, whom we remember in a special way today" (Ex. Book 8, p. 34). On 8 September 1916: "Feast of the Nativity of the B. V. Mary. At 5.15 [p.m.] we leave for the Consolata Shrine. At 6.00 [p.m.] the Rosary begins, followed by a talk and solemn Benediction by our Rev. Rector" (Ex. Book 8, p.61). The diaries do not always mention Fr. Allamano's presence on Marian feasts. From the "Conferences", however, we know that he went to the Mother-House and spoke about Our Lady. For instance, on 21 November 1916, the diaries are silent, but we know that he went to the Mother-House and gave a long talk about the "Presentation of the B. V. Mary to the Temple" (IMC Conf II, 792-801). The same thing happened on 25 March 1917: the diaries are silent, but from the "Conferences" we know that he spoke to the community about the "Feast of the Annunciation to the B. V. Mary" (IMC Conf III, 82-84).

The fact that Fr. Allamano flooded, so to speak, his young people with Marian spirit appears from the following simple words addressed to the Consolata Missionary Sisters on 29 August 1920: "Tomorrow is the beginning of the Novena for the Nativity [of the B. V. Mary]; then there will be the one for the Name of Mary; then the one for Our Lady of Sorrows, and finally the one for Our Lady of Ransom [now also called O. L. of Mercy] who is Our Lady of the slaves and, therefore, somehow our own. All of these in the same month [September]. However, the most solemn is the one for the Nativity, because it is the anniversary of her birth" (MC Conf III, 113). How much more do we need?

VI

(prepared for "Da Casa Madre", June 2011)

"THIS VERY MAIN FEAST OF OURS" FROM THE SEMINARY'S DIARIES

FR. ALLAMANO AS AN EDUCATOR IN UNIVERSAL MISSION (I)

A basic conviction of Fr. Allamano was that everything in our Institute had to focus on forming missionaries. Personally he dedicated all his energy to this. It is sufficient to read his "Conferences" in order to see the missionary slant of all his conversations. Obviously, the diaries do not reveal all his missionary educational method, and even less do they reveal that aspect which was characteristically and totally his, synthesized by the famous "First saints, then missionaries". In order to understand these, we should read his letters and his "Conferences", which are the primary source.

However, from the diaries a very intense missionary spirit emerges. We can see that the Mother-House community was immersed in an atmosphere that was leading uniquely to mission. I will try to point this out by presenting three aspects that seem very interesting to me: using the feast of the Epiphany; emphasizing missionary Saints; and the intense participation of Fr. Allamano in the celebrations for the departures for the missions. This month [June] I will consider the first two aspects. I shall present the third one in the next month [July].

Epiphany, feast of the universal mission. There is no doubt that, after the feast of O. L. Consolata, the Epiphany was the most solemn feast celebrated in the Mother-House. The reason for this lay in its missionary significance.

I am reporting here two descriptions from the diaries, which somehow emphasize the external celebration. They are concise and, at times, describe secondary details. However, an intense missionary enthusiasm can be detected. On 6 January 1909, we read: "Epiphany. At 5.00 [p.m.], Rosary -- Solemn Benediction by our Very Ven. Rev. Rector -- At 6.00 [p.m.], our Very Rev. Rector, the Vice-Rector, and the Consolata Superiors, enter the hall at the sound of a march from a gramophone. When all are seated, a seminarian reads a composition in Italian; then a young man recites the poem 'Natale' by Manzoni; next follows the singing by our young men (one of them as a soloist) and 5 seminarians of the musical composition 'Orietur in diebus eius, etc.' [In his days will arise...]; after this, a young man recites the poem 'My vocation' [...] -- Distribution of slices of cake and a glass of wine, while chosen pieces of music are played by the gramophone -- At the request of our Very Ven. Rev. Rector, the 'Orietur' composition is sung again -- At 7.30 [p.m.] the evening is concluded by our Rev. Rector's blessing, after which all the guests leave at the sound of another march" (Ex. Book 1, pp. 52-53). On 6 January 1914: "Epiphany. [After solemn Benediction], we go to the hall and at 5.20 [p.m.] the entertainment begins. Our hall is magnificently decorated and there are many guests, priests and lay people, and benefactors surrounding our Ven. Rev. Rector, Vice-Rector, and Mgr. Barlassina. (The various parts of the entertainment are described). All are happy and enthusiastic. When the guests have left, our Rev. Bursar distributes dry banana slices brought from Kikuyuland by Mgr. Barlassina. The entertainment ends a little earlier than 7.30 [p.m.]. Then we have recreation" (Ex. Book 6, pp. 21-22).

At times the feast of the Epiphany was advantageously chosen for some specifically missionary celebrations of our Institute, as on 6 January 1911: "Epiphany. [...] At 4.00 p.m., Rosary and benediction by our Very Rev. Rector; 'Veni Creator'; giving of the habit to those who will soon depart for the missions, Frs. Cavallero, Perrachon, Rossi, and Br. Umberto. Short talk. At 5.15 [p.m.], musical-literary-artistic entertainment, at the presence of our Very Rev. Rector, Vice-Rector, Consolata Superiors, etc. [...] Young men's display, concluded by a slides-show on the Holy Child, [...]. Farewell poem for the departing missionaries -- Distribution of meringues and slices of cake, together with a glass of wine. At 7.30 [p.m.]: end" (Ex. Book 3, pp. 19-20).

During the war [1915-1918], there are restrictions; however, the missionary atmosphere of the feast is maintained. For instance, on 6 January 1916, we read: "Epiphany. Sunday time-table. This year, because of the war and the absence of many of our confreres who are in the army, we celebrate the feast in a simpler way, without entertainment and external activities. [...]. At 4.30 [p.m.], solemn Vespers with two Assistants wearing a cope at the sides of the main celebrant. Benediction by our Very Rev. Rector assisted by a Deacon and a Sub-deacon, with sung Litany, 'Tantum Ergo', and

'Laudate Dominum'. Later, conference by our Ven. Rev. Rector on the Magi, after which he reads letters from Africa, and gives sweets, a Divine Providence's gift, to be distributed. So, in this modest way we live this very main feast of ours. Our Ven. Rev. Rector blesses also the boxes of various materials which will leave tomorrow for Africa and have been lined up under our porches waiting for a time of safety from Austrian torpedo-boats on the sea" (Ex. Book 8, p. 22). We may notice that, not having to describe the entertainments, more space was given to the liturgical and missionary character of the feast.

To see that a solemn celebration of Epiphany became a tradition in our Institute, we may read the report of 6 January 1920: "Feast of the Epiphany. After the feast of O. L. Consolata, this is the greatest feast in our Institute. [Here there is a description of the liturgical celebrations, the entertainment, as well as a long list of participants]. The entertainment was a success in all aspects: singing, drama, compositions. After the entertainment, in the hall, the most distinguished guests are offered a glass of Barolo wine and some pastry" (Ex. Book 14, pp. 28-30).

Missionary Saints. As a short introduction, I would like to mention at this point that Fr. Allamano made a great use of the so-called "educational method of models". In his mind, Jesus was the most excellent model of all virtues. Very seldom he talked about a virtue without mentioning how Jesus practised and proposed it. Also Our Lady was a privileged model, mentioned on very many occasions. Then, came the Saints: not all of them, but those more congenial to him (St. Joseph Cafasso, St. Francis de Sales, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Teresa of Avila, etc.) and those with more evident missionary characteristics.

Besides the Apostle St. Paul, the missionary Saints more mentioned and proposed as special Patron Saints of our Institute are St. Francis Xavier, St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen, and Bd. Antonio Neyrot. He also mentioned other great missionary Saints, like Bd. Teofano Venard and St. Peter Claver. This last one, however, does not appear in the diaries, but only in the "Conferences".

St. Francis Xavier was, according to Fr. Allamano, the Missionaries' model "par excellence". It is enough to examine his "Conferences" to see how important this Saint has been in the "educational method of models" used by Fr. Allamano. Also in the diaries, even if less evident, this preference of his appears. The first mention we find is on the occasion of the departure of missionaries on 3 December 1908: "(St. Francis Xavier) [...] At 4.00 [p.m.], giving of the habits and crucifixes to members of the 10th departure (Frs. L. Rosso, G. Aimo, and Br. Luigi Bezzone) by our Very Rev. Rector, wearing a cope, with closed doors (which are later opened for the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament). Our young men are also present. Our Choir sings the 'Magnificat', 'Quam pulchri...' [How beautiful...], Litany and 'Tantum Ergo'. Our Rev. Rector gives a short, loving talk, applying to missionaries what has been said about St. Francis Xavier: 'Totus Dei -- totus proximi -- totus sui' [He belonged totally to God, to neighbours, to himself]. Then, there is recreation and a short meeting with our Rev. Rector -- Then study" (Ex. Book 1, pp. 41-42).

All occasions were made use of to emphasize the missionary holiness of St. Francis [Xavier], but especially on the occasion of his feast on 3 December, or close to this date. On 2 December 1914, we read: "At 7.00 [p.m.], our Ven. Rev. Rector gathers all of us in our study-room, and speaks to us about St. Francis Xavier" (Ex. Book 7, p. 12). On 5 December 1915: "Sunday. Monthly Retreat. Sunday time-table. [...]. In the evening, Our Ven. Rev. Rector tells us a few words about St. Francis Xavier: he said that he has been 'totus Dei, totus proximi, totus sui'" (Ex. Book 8, p. 17).

Also for St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen Fr. Allamano confessed that he had a special devotion since he was a seminarian and wanted to become a missionary. There was also what he did at Rivoli on 24 April 1900, memorial of St. Fidelis: during the celebration of the Mass, he kept on the altar the famous letter addressed to Card. A. Richelmy "with which the foundation of our Institute was decided".

From the diaries, we see that Fr. Allamano has always encouraged his young men to invoke and imitate the holy Capuchin, St. Fidelis, a martyr in Raethia, especially on the day of his memorial.

On 1 January 1909, we read: "Monthly Retreat. Sunday time-table. In the evening, after Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, meeting with our Very Ven. Rev. Rector. He proposes as our Patron for this year St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen, indicates his meekness and poverty as virtues to imitate, gives us a relic of the Saint to keep in our study-room and a book on his life to read in the Dining Hall" (Ex. Book 1, p. 51). On 23 April 1915: "[Friday]. At 7.00 p.m., our Ven. Rev. Rector gathers all of us in our study-room and speaks to us about St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen, whose feast will be celebrated tomorrow. There is no Spiritual Reading" (Ex. Book 7, p. 32). On 22 April 1917: "Sunday. Conference by our Rev. Rector on vocation, on the occasion of the oncoming feast of St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen. He also gives our Rev. Prefect the booklet 'Esto fidelis' [Be faithful] to be read for all in the Dining Hall" (Ex. Book 9, p. 21).

To the Dominican Blessed A. Neyrot, who died as a martyr in Tunisia, Fr. Allamano was bound because the Blessed had been several times in the villa at Rivoli. This bond was extended to the whole community. For instance, on 30 September 1908, the diary reports: "At 6.45 [a.m.] departure for Rivoli, following the main road. Arrival at 9.15. Under the guidance of our Very Rev. Rector, we pick grapes. At 11.30 [a.m.], Visit to the Blessed Sacrament in the Holy Cross church. After lunch, visit to the altar of Bd. A. Neyrot in the Collegiate Church -- Then we pick grapes again" (Ex. Book 1, pp. 28-29). At the beginning of 1911, Fr. Allamano proposed Bd. Neyrot as the Patron Saint of the year, indicating humility as the characteristic virtue to imitate, because this missionary, before dying as a martyr, had denied his faith, and then resumed it again (cf Ex. Book 3, p. 19). The visit to the relics of this Blessed in the Collegiate Church at Rivoli was repeated at other times. For instance on 11 April 1917: "The whole Family of the (Consolata) Missionaries goes to Rivoli. In the afternoon, our Rev. Rector also arrives. After a short familiar meeting, in his company we go as a pilgrimage to visit the relics of Bd. A. Neyrot, whose feast was celebrated yesterday" (Ex. Book 9, p. 20).

We should also notice that Fr. Allamano emphasized also another missionary martyr: Blessed Teofano Venard. On 2 May 1909, we read: "(Patronage of St. Joseph). Sunday time-table -- Solemn Benediction by our Very Ven. Rev. Rector -- Recreation -- Meeting in the hall for all: our Rev. Rector commemorates the Martyr Teofano Venard, who has been proclaimed Blessed today in Rome, and says that he will be one of our special Patron Saints -- Distribution of meringues, one each, given by a benefactor" (Ex. Book 1, p. 84).