



## **FEAST DAY OF OUR BLESSED FOUNDER**

**JOSEPH ALLAMANO**

**16<sup>th</sup> February 2012**

Dearest Missionaries,

at this particular moment in the life of our Institute on the occasion of the feast of our Blessed Founder, driven by the spirit of renewal proposed by the Chapter, in the climate of reflection for the preparation and implementation of the Regional Conferences, I consider of fundamental importance to suggest to all to re-discover the centrality of the mission as a source of our identity and work. The Constitutions, article 17, remind us of what is constitutive in relation to the goal of our Institute: “The announcement of the Good News to the people not yet evangelized.” We are invited to the frontiers of the Church, to the groups of people who do not know or have not yet accepted Jesus Christ. These and the new “pagans” of today are the *raison d’être* of our Institute. The Founder expresses it well when he says: “We are for the non-Christians.” I think that this fundamental principle should come first in the minds of those who enter the Institute, inspiring all our activities and choices.

The testimony of the Founder reveals facets, always new, of the Gospel message and renews our commitment to its proclamation. Blessed Joseph Allamano has transmitted to us a charisma to be lived according to his own spirit. He was so firmly convinced as to assert: “The spirit, you have to take it from me.” This expression, multiplied by many similar ones, is more than a recommendation: it is his will, which for us is a rule of life, light on our journey. Without the spirit of Allamano we would not be Consolata Missionaries. This leads us to a constant reference to him, to his teaching and the witness of his life, to obtain a kind of “identity card” of what we have to be.

To be missionaries of today’s reality, we need to revisit our Founder, to be at his school and relearn to live the charisma. K. Rahner wrote: “you can keep an inheritance only if you conquer a new future. Pure conservatism is sterile and does not even reach its legitimate purpose, knowing that “new” in Christianity is of course always a discovery and a creative development of its genuine essence, adhering to the times.”

Return to the Founder and to a new historical understanding restores strength and identity to the Institute, re-compacting it around some structurally united hubs: at the cultural level (belonging), at the level of experience (what is lived), at the level of mission (the fundamental option). We must revitalize our attachment to the Founder without detaching ourselves from the root, but also without even repeating the past in a mere literal way. The interculturality of our membership, the new vocational geographies, the new mission places urge us and promote a new charismatic dynamism, a different reinterpretation of our Founder.

Certainly it is vital that the Institute be in the wake of its charismatic tradition, however, this does not mean closing our eyes to the changes that are bearers of the signs of the future. Here arises the need to know how to harmonize fidelity to tradition with the dynamics of life, culture and history. Because the possibility of historical continuity is related to the revitalization of the charisma. To be in the world and time in a dynamic way is for the Institute fidelity to the charisma, love for the Founder and fidelity to the mission, without fear of losing our identity.

The Feast of Blessed Allamano present to us the question about the space that he occupies in our spiritual journey and commitment to the mission. The answer is personal but it must also touch our living together in communion as missionaries. For the celebrations of this year I would like to touch on some aspects, which recall the topics of the Chapter and also the permanent presence of Allamano for the Institute and for each one of us.

## ***1. Our missionary identity***

The Church has recognized and proposed the characteristic feature that distinguishes Allamano among the host of saints flourished in Turin and in Piedmont: *«he has perceived the duty of every local church to be open to the universal mission»*. This is why he started our Institute with the priority and privileged objective of announcing the gospel to those who yet do not know it. He in fact exhorts us: *«give yourselves with all your heart and all your strength to the work of evangelization»*, which must come first in our interests and commitments. This is the reason why we have become part of his Institute (see Letters, p. 135). This is *«still today the greatest challenge of the Church»*, recalled Blessed John Paul II, considering that most of humanity has not yet had the first proclamation of Christ and therefore we can say that *«mission ad gentes is still at the beginning»* (RM 40, cf. 3). Add to this the phenomenon, nowadays quite significant, of those who abandon the faith.

Its gravity is evident from church initiatives planned in the near future: the Year of the faith and the Synod of the Bishops on *“The new evangelization for the transmission of the faith.”* An issue that challenges us. The urgency of the first proclamation or re-evangelization calls our attention and urges us to give a qualified contribution for the renewal of the pastoral methods. Ongoing formation as well as the choice of graduate studies should keep that into account. Not only for our vocation (Const. 17; Gen. Dir 79.2), but also for the style of Allamano, attentive to the circumstances of his environment in Turin and to those encountered by his missionaries in other contexts. He is recognized by his contemporaries as a person who “kept his eye and ear attentive and alert to what was happening” (A. Cantono); *«he always had an intuition of the precise needs of the time»; «he did not know old age, because of his watchful and penetrating eye»* (Pinardi).

Looking to the Founder means to penetrate into his feelings, choices and behaviour, so as to act accordingly. It is worth remembering what was said on the occasion of the beatification of Allamano: *«An exalted Founder and an Institute closed in on itself do not get along»*. The policy of our Founder agrees, in preview, with the statement of Pope John XXIII: *«We look to the past, but in view of the present. We are not destined to guard a museum, but to cultivate a garden»*. This is the proposal that we find in the Chapter: *«We are called to fight inertia, lack of reflection, of personal and communal conversion in front of the challenges that a globalized world poses, and the continuous reflection on the new mission ad gentes»* (n . 16).

## ***2. Our spirituality***

The Chapter also urges us to «deepen our spirituality, by returning to the legacy of the Founder» (No. 12). In this regard we cannot forget that he was not content just to send missionaries, but he tenaciously wanted them to be of “quality”. It does not correspond to our Founder an Institute which is not glowing with fervour, striving to perfection, in spiritual, cultural, pastoral qualification, in order to be abreast with a vocation which he regards as sublime. Allamano abhorred mediocrity. This is revealed by his repeated exhortation to be energetic, enterprising, and industrious. He wanted people who, having the world as their horizon, are open-minded.

To be faithful to him, the Institute must regain this dynamism, overcoming the temptation of the minimum needed in order to “always do more”, to go “forward” in the spiritual growth and in all activities without fear of exaggeration.

By restricting the discussion to the charismatic foundation, he continues to propose an orientation to the Lord and a burning commitment to make him known, both with “total” commitment, without any bending, brackets, exceptions. This is also a unique aspect of its proposal: to be missionaries, having an intimate communion with “God” and an intense apostolic activity, for which “it takes fire.” Missionaries in love with God “to the point of giving their life” for the proclamation of the gospel. This is the kind of missionary wanted by him: to be holy in order to be missionaries. And he insists adding in a significant way: «This has always been my idea! ».

Our history includes authentic witnesses of this type. But it is a need even today, because today’s world «claims evangelists that speak of a God whom they know and who is familiar to them, as if they could see the invisible» (EN 76).

### ***3. The local community***

Another choice of the Chapter for the next six years, and in particular for the first three years, is addressed to the qualification of the local communities (3 and 23). It sets out the rationale and objectives, but the root is the intuition of the Founder. He himself claims to have thought, in designing the foundation of the Institute, of providing a family to him who leaves everything for the Mission. He includes it in the first draft of the Regulations since 1891, providing that he who joins the Institute «should consider himself to be a living and interested member of a new family». He constantly repeats: «The Institute is not a college, not even a seminary, but a family» (VS 405); to whomever asks to enter he says: «Here you will find a family. » This is also a constant refrain, directed in different ways to candidates, missionaries, superiors, communities, specifying that the resulting «unity of purpose and effort is like the soul and the life» of the Institute.

Hence the method of doing mission, of relating to people and take decisions, always in accordance with the family spirit.

Also the relations between the Founder and his missionaries are qualified by this. He states and proves that in his heart there are always his «dear missionaries». And the same happens in them for him, always considered as «their Father». This bond, strengthened by the annual liturgical celebration, requires the deepening of his knowledge, its dissemination, soliciting his intercession, putting into practice his teachings, growing in the family spirit. In a word, to make him live within us, within our communities, across the Institute, in the Churches, for the proclamation of the gospel according to his charismatic intuition.

May the Consolata, inspirer of his work for the Mission help us to daily, and not just sporadically, carry it out in our community and apostolate.

To one and all: *courage and ahead in Domino!*

Roma, February 16, 2012.

Fr. Stefano Camerlengo  
Father General