

**2010**

**Letter of Father General  
Fr. AQUILÉO FIORENTINI, IMC  
To the Young People in formation  
(B.U., Fascicolo 133, 2010, pp 1-14)**



Rome, May 20, 2010.

**ACCOMPANIED BY ALLAMANO  
TO BE MISSIONARIES**

**Dear young people,**

I write in a particular way to you, members of the communities of novices and of the major seminaries. I do it before the Feast of our dearest Mother Consolata.

Earlier this year, I sent a letter to all the members of the Institute to communicate that the special protector for 2010 was our Father Founder, the Blessed Joseph Allamano. What I wrote in that letter obviously also applies to you. However, I'd like to converse with you in particular, to show that our Father has a lot to say to you, at this particular time of your life. You communicate to his charisma in the same way as the young people that he himself had accepted in the Institute, but you experience it today in this time, which is your very own. To live the charisma today with dynamic fidelity, the indispensable prerequisite is to have a good knowledge of the Founder, appreciate him much, love him and accept all his life criteria.

The style of this writing of mine has some intended emphases: the priestly, since we have experienced the Year of the Priesthood proclaimed by Benedict XVI; the returning to the sources just to draw from our Father what he had stated in relation to the priesthood, the consecrated and missionary life; the interrelationship between formator and trainee, since he himself had been a formator.

I invite you to consider with what degree of intensity he has been preparing for the priesthood, lived with true religious and missionary spirit, because his method has been so effective that it has made him grow up in holiness; then, as he also prepared his sons for the priesthood and the mission, because his educational art included and still includes principles and criteria which are essentially

valid and ought to be faithfully kept by us and developed with dynamic creativity.

## **LIKE ALLAMANO, FORM YOURSELVES WITH COMMITMENT**

### **Vocation calls for decision**

The vocation to the priesthood and the consecrated life is a special gift of God that fits into the great plan of love and salvation that God has for every person and for all humanity. The Lord, by his own special initiative, chooses some to follow more closely his Son Jesus Christ, to be his ministers and privileged witnesses. To the trust in God's initiative, there must be also a positive response by the human person. You are part of this group of those who have been called. I invite you to consider how Allamano has lived his years of seminary life in order to follow his footsteps. Do you remember those famous words spoken to his brothers who wanted to persuade him to delay his entry into the seminary, but rather attend with them the course of higher education? Here's how he reported that family meeting: «My greatest consolation is that I have always made my utmost in following the vocation that God had given me. When I was young I had two brothers, one was studying medicine and the other law, and they wanted me to study like them. But I answered: “No, I want to be a priest! The Lord calls me today, who assures me that in three years time the Lord will call me again?”» (SMC Conf., I, 59, cf. SMC Conf., II, 290; IMC Conf., I, 491). And he concluded: «I should kneel throughout my whole life with my head bowed in order to thank the Lord for his call» (SMC Conf., II, 559). Here you have the first attitude of which the Founder is a model especially today: awareness and decision about his vocation. Remember that the Founder was looking for and is still looking for very strong and determined young people, not for insecure ones, unable to find their way, agitated by constant changes of mind. The important thing is to never lose the love expressed on the day of our first “Yes”.

He brought with him this initial decision to the seminary, taking up a fervent formation process. Seminaries in those days suffered on account of a rather rigid approach, although we must not underestimate their values. In fact, from the seminary of Turin has emerged a group of holy priests, like Cafasso, Don Bosco, Murialdo, the Boccardo brothers, etc. The education system, except for minor variations, rested on three pillars: piety, study and discipline.

Allamano has easily adjusted to his seminary, just the way it was; indeed he has loved it and, once a priest, he agreed to go back to it, first as an assistant and then as a spiritual director. Eventually he admitted candidly: «After 14 years in the seminary, I cried [in leaving it], but certainly not everyone thought likewise» (IMC Conf., II, 21).

And to say that he had not joked: «I will be forever grateful to my superiors, because they did not let me do what I wanted, but they have always mutilated me» (IMC Conf., II, 463).

### **A guided and free formation**

His confidence, as well as his trust in the educators, like the rector, the spiritual director and the teachers, was total. He trusted them because he believed that they visibly expressed the care that God had for his preparation to the priesthood. As an example of this attitude of confidence and trust I wish to report a fact that it may seem trivial to us, but that in those days was quite important. Father L. Sales affirms: «Unfortunately, in those days of Jansenistic influence, daily communion was not yet much in use even in seminaries, and he was one of the few who practiced it. For many elderly members this conduct of the young seminarian could not fail to make an impression on them, and indeed the fear of being noticed would have made him sometimes withdraw from receiving communion, if he had not been encouraged by the Director: - Have communion, have communion! - But my fellow students will say that I want to look good... - And you do it in order to become even better» (L. Sales, Biographical Notes).

At the same time Allamano was free and very personal. We keep the text of the prayer, which he composed and which was approved by his spiritual director, with which he has said his “Yes” before Mary, «queen and mother of the virgins», the vow of chastity before receiving what was then called the order of sub-diaconate. On that occasion the candidates to the priesthood, invited by the bishop, used to make the famous step forward, visible sign with which they undertook a lifetime commitment to perfect chastity and celibacy. Listen to the confidence that the Founder himself made to Fr. D. Ferrero, explaining the reason for his anticipated vow: *«I did not want that it could be said that I had made my vow to God just because it was demanded by the sub-diaconate, but I wanted that the Lord could receive my spontaneous homage before it was required [by the law of the Church]»* (D. Ferrero, *Memories of the Very Venerable Father*, IMC Archives). *Here is what the Founder-seminarian teaches you: to be mindful of, faithful to and consistent with the guide of your formators, though keeping your inner freedom and spontaneity in making decisions. You must always be able to say, «I am the one who has decided it».*

### **Integral formation, with some priorities**

In his preparation for the priesthood, Allamano has had a special care in his commitment to the spiritual and intellectual dimension, without ever neglecting the human and pastoral one.

In terms of spiritual formation, his goal was primarily the internalization of the Word of God and listening to the suggestions of his educators. As it was the custom then, the seminarian Allamano has made his “Rule of life” that, over the years, he will amend several times in order to adapt it to the different situations. Despite his thoroughness, this regulation makes us understand which gear Allamano used from the beginning. For example, here is the plan to enhance the start of the day: “Getting up in the morning: I shall observe punctuality, jumping up at the first touch of the bell, and modesty, remembering that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. I shall immediately raise my mind to God and thank him for the happy night, offering to him all my thoughts, words and actions of the day, proposing to flee from sin and to work for my sanctification. I will turn also my thought to the Blessed Mary that she may bless me” (Rules of life, IMC Archives). Notice the sentence that can become a slogan: «I shall immediately raise my mind to God»!

Regarding his studies, Allamano distinguished himself mainly for an extraordinary effort that, though costing him a lot since he was of a delicate health, has helped him achieve a good intellectual preparation. In the general archives, we have his school notebooks, which show how carefully and orderly he organized the content of the topics presented by his teachers. His study, however, was not only an operation of the mind, but it reached down into the depths of his personality as a seminarian and strengthened his faith. It was Msgr. Giovanni Batista Ressa, Bishop of Mondovì and fellow seminarian of the Founder, who testified: «When I prepared a catechism for the primary and secondary schools of the diocese, I went to see Allamano on the topic of the Eucharist, and especially on the sacrifice of the Mass, remembering our studies. He took out some small notebooks full of notes, which were fully in line with my ideas, but they were more devout» (Testimony, IMC Archives). Take Notice of that “more devout”, very much indicative of the personality of Allamano in whom both science and faith fit together.

You might consider the seminarian Allamano in other respects, e.g. in his relations with his peers, in his ability to serve, in the kindness of his feeling, or in regards to the missionary dimension. Do it yourselves by reading the many studies and especially the biographies we own. To conclude this aspect, I merely wish to state the opinion that the aforementioned Bishop G. B. Ressa said in the Consolata Shrine, on the 50th anniversary of the ordination of our Father, and that is in itself a synthesis of his personality: «[Allamano] was our model for the fervour in prayer, for frequent Communion, attention to the professors, for commitment to the study, for his patience and kindness, for the glory of his angelic virtue. I never saw him upset or restless, always in peace, beloved by all.

We all knew that the closest to the Heart of Jesus, his very friend, was Allamano; nobody would have dared to be compared with him» (G. B. Ressa, Homily for the 50th anniversary of ordination, IMC Archives).

### **In collaboration with his formators**

As an educator, rest assured, our Founder had a pedagogy that shows to be still quite modern. He also teaches you how to relate to your formators whom the Institute has placed by your side, to accompany you to the religious consecration, the priesthood and the mission. I think that a better understanding of his educational method can be of help to you in your current training. I wish to draw your attention to some of his characteristics, inviting you to implement them in your relationship with your formators and also spiritually with him, when you compare yourselves with his thought. Keep in mind that Allamano was not perceived by the young people only as an “educator”, but first of all, and I would say even more, as a “father.” Between him and his sons there was a spontaneous current of mutual understanding, which facilitated their growth. Young people felt welcomed, respected and above all loved. And they reciprocated with equal respect and love. «As Founder – Fr. Guido Bartorelli said enthusiastically in a commemoration at Alpignano - we would not have changed him with anyone else» (Commemoration, February 16, 1981, IMC Archives).

He made no distinction: all were called by the Spirit for the mission and, therefore, all were equally his. Take notice of a particular aspect that has always impressed me. The Founder did not indicate different ideals, more or less high ideals, in proportion to the different capacities of the individual young people, but he has always proposed to all the highest ideal of holiness. He knew well those young men and knew they were not saints, he even said so explicitly. But, being a positive and optimistic man regarding the ability of every human being to improve his state, he accompanied them on an upward path of growth and courage, never content with the state achieved. Let us listen to him: «The air of this house is an air that forms saints. Not all are saints (though they should be), but nevertheless they can become saint. [...] Say this: Ad quid venisti? [Why did you come?]. To become a saint, not for any other reason. If you will become saints then you will achieve everything, otherwise nothing. You have got it all wrong» (IMC Conf., II, 83). Explaining the “primary purpose” of the Institute, on November 16, 1913, the Founder strongly stated: «[He who comes] here he must first of all become holy; “sanctification of its members” not just of some, but of all [...]. If some people do not tend towards this end the primary goal is not being achieved. All are involved, so as not to do an injustice to anyone, since all are members and must become holy, they must help each other» (IMC Conf., I, 619). From the first day till the last, holiness has been the ideal which has been proposed to all with conviction and insistence. Great men operate at these levels, they fly high!

Between you and your formators, then, must mature a profound and spontaneous understanding that consists of mutual esteem and affection, knowing that no one is excluded from reaching the highest ideal of missionary holiness.

### **In the community meetings**

Allamano, living at the Consolata Shrine and not in the Mother House, used to educate the young people to life and mission, especially through communitarian and individual meetings. You know how he consistently and regularly went every Sunday and often even on weekdays to the Mother House. The testimonies of those who then had the good fortune of attending his lectures are moving and explain the climate that was created and the density of the contents that the Founder offered. They were really family gatherings: «On Sunday, - Br. B. Falda reported – he was all for his sons. [...]».

His conference was not like that of a professor’s teaching or unbending, but it was the Father sitting

among his sons whom he wanted to be well close to him, especially the Brothers; he used to speak to us in a simple way. They were like recommendations whispered into the ears, but they remained engraved in our souls and we were imbued with his spirit» (Testimony, IMC Archives). Fr V. Dolza in his simplicity has given us a flattering opinion of those meetings: «His zeal for our sanctification and training is very much evident in his Sunday conferences. He used to arrive smiling, sit down, pull out a ticket: and we remained enchanted by his word. How we looked forward to those moments, always too short for us» (Commemoration, February 16, 1945, IMC Archives). Young people “remained enchanted.” More than this could not be said. Note that the Sunday meetings were far from being formal. The attitude of the Founder immediately created an atmosphere of spontaneity. To know more about this I suggest to you to consider the volumes of the Conferences and see the way he used to begin his conversation, and especially the way he used to end them. He was always very spontaneous and exciting. Often the meetings were enriched by the reading of news from the missions and also ended with the distribution of sweets or cakes, or fruit.

These are characteristics that can inspire our community meetings today, where together with all the wealth of contents we should combine a familiar and spontaneous style. The Founder encourages us along this way.

### **In the individual contacts**

In addition to these community meetings, the Founder used to entertain himself individually with his young people. First he welcomed them with warmth and kindness, both at the Institute and at the Consolata Shrine, without ever giving the impression of being in a hurry. Witnesses said that when he met with people, Allamano seemed to have nothing else to do, so comfortable and at ease he was with them. Among many others, I mention just two. Fr. D. Ferrero: «He listened to us and enquired about us, as if he had nothing else to do». (Testimony, undated, IMC Archives). Sr. Clare Strapazon: «When my turn arrived, he welcomed me with much kindness and fatherly love, made me sit close to him and attentively listened to me as if he had nothing else to do» (Testimony, Nov. 21, 1943, IMC Archives).

This attitude of calm and full attention to the other and to what the other wants to communicate during the meeting is of fundamental importance in the dialogue between educators and young students. «There was never, in thirty years - so wrote Fr. L. Sales in the first biography of Allamano – that someone had not been received by him [...]. Then, with just a few words he would set every matter right. But one had to hear how he pronounced his words, see his moderate and yet resolute gesture and posture of his head and that clear and piercing look of his eyes that went down, down, into the intimate part of the heart» (L. Sales, *The Servant God ...*, 234-235). Also P. V. Sandrone has something to say to us: «With short sentences, generally taken from Holy Scripture, uttered in a determined tone, so characteristic of him, our Rector used to summarize his private conversations, animating us in facing our difficulties. Here are some of those he most frequently said to me: - Nunc coepi [come around, now begin again] - I want to become a saint - See God in everything and everyone - God wants generous souls – He who wants to be holy has to be singular in some aspect - and so on». (P. V. Sandrone, *Memoirs*, p. 10, IMC Archives).

In addition to the art of welcoming people, we also admire in the Founder his ability to communicate his own experiences, as if he were communicating himself. «I tell you what I feel» (IMC Conf., III, 595): these words, uttered after some advices on how to make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, contain the secret of his ability to enter into the lives of his sons. He wanted to accompany the growth of people by communicating, besides doctrine, his own experience of life. And he was not hiding this: «I wish to apply my experience of community life to this Institute (IMC Conf., I, 15). [From the spiritual exercises] I have brought to you the spirit, a deposit of spirit, and do you know what it is? Some good thoughts that impressed me more I bring them to you. [...] And so also in the sermons, meditations, examinations, making myself good I was thinking about you too. For you

and for me» (IMC Conf., II, 634).

### **To know in depth the thought and spirit of Allamano**

It is not enough to have esteem and love of the Founder. It is not enough to pray for his intercession. It is essential to know well his thought and, consequently, his spirit. Those who lived with him listened to him, saw him, they were attracted by his witness of life. We can say that all our first confreres knew him very well. It is not by mere coincidence that their testimonies about him are so deep and precise. Just read them and notice how they were in tune, Father and sons, even in their thoughts.

It is spontaneous to bring home this speech, to each one of us, and ask whether we can claim to know the mind of the Founder. We can go over in our mind the number of books we have read regarding his life, his biographies... Some text: “The spiritual life”, the volumes of his lectures, letters, biographies that missionaries have written... I understand the difficulty of the language, but there is no middle way of doing this. To steal the vitality of thought and spirit of the Founder we must start from there: to know what he said and wrote, then “ruminate it”, as he explained, that is to deepen our knowledge of him through prayer and make it become our very own.

Fortunately we have so much material that helps us. Recently, just for you young people, we have made a work of renewal on the material of his lectures, demanded by the fact that between us and Founder, the Church has celebrated an Ecumenical Council. The new book “I want you to be so” is especially for you, dear young people, and I assure you that in it you will find a complete and orderly summary of the thought and spirit of the Founder. Appreciate it as much as you can both in community and individually, more so now that we have the various translations. Even in terms of the knowledge of the thought and spirit of the Founder I wish to propose to you some concrete paths that can be of help to you. Your task is to develop fully the indications that I will describe below.

### **On the ministerial priesthood**

Let us start from the priesthood, which is of interest to almost all of you. I have already written enough on this topic dealing with the Priesthood Year in the common circular and I have also said something before, speaking of Allamano’s fervour as a seminarian. But I want to add one more element. The theology at the time of the Founder insisted on the “dignity” of the priesthood. Starting from the text of 1 Peter 2:9: «But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood», the emphasis was placed precisely on the concept of “sovereignty”, i.e. of dignity of the priest. Allamano also, like all the saints of his time, followed this line of thought. On the occasion of the priestly ordination of five confreres in 1912, the Founder has stated: «Five new priests mean five kings, five angels, five divine beings» (IMC Conf., I, 429). The concept thus expressed is rather terse, but the Founder has also explained it extensively. Although today we would not repeat verbatim these expressions, we must maintain their basic conviction, namely the unconditional appreciation for our priestly vocation. I repeat again that expression of our Father which I quoted at the beginning: «I should stay on my knees all my life with my head bowed, thanking the Lord for the vocation» (SMC Conf., II, 559).

Now I would like to invite each of you to ask: have I this appreciation for my vocation to the priesthood? Do I consider it as the greatest treasure I possess? Are supernatural the reasons that have led me to the priesthood? If it is so, then it follows that the commitment to formation must be proportionate, i. e. the maximum. The Founder believed so: «To so much dignity must correspond also so much holiness» (IMC Conf., I, 430).

### **On the mission “ad gentes”**

And now let us reflect on the missionary dimension of our vocation. The issue about “mission today” you know it from your studies of missiology. As an Institute, we want to be open to the new

requirements, being faithful to the indications of the Church, manifested in its Pastors, just as the Founder did. The mission of the third millennium should not find us on backward positions and even unprepared. What I wish to stress on the formation level is a double aspect: the exclusivity and the totality of the missionary vocation. Exclusivity means that we are “only” missionaries, so it follows that you are preparing yourselves to be “only” missionaries and not for any other task that might well have an apostolic character. On this regard I could tell you many things, but I limit myself to just report those famous and familiar words of our Founder: «He who would have come to our Institute with a view different from that of becoming a Consolata missionary, he would be an intruder. [...]. The Institute is not a college or a seminary where there could be the formation of various vocations, but only the missionary one and specifically that of the Consolata» (IMC Conf., I, 623). This exclusive missionary dimension has practical implications not only for the period of basic formation, but also for the whole life. In the future you will be assigned only to missionary activities, keep that well in mind.

Allamano also insisted on the intrinsic “totality” of the missionary vocation. Totality means to not exclude anything, nor as to the how, or the time, to give our best for the mission and forever. Let us again listen to the Founder when he asked the youth people regarding their vocation: «Why have you come here? Why are you here?... [...]. You all respond: “To become a missionary”: and if someone had any other purpose he would be wrong: the air here is good only for those who want to become missionaries, otherwise it is not good for your lungs. But that is why you must become saints. The Lord normally, in order to convert people, does not make use of those who are not saints: first thing, therefore, is to sanctify ourselves, otherwise we will go there and instead of converting others we could pervert. So let us become saints» (IMC Conf., II, 82).

You see, not only missionaries, but holy missionaries. There is a “more” that the Founder considered essential for a missionary and he used to say it, applying it to the different situations of life. For example: «If a Christian should not seek all the comforts, the more so a missionary must not seek them» (IMC Conf., III, 291). «Ours is a life of sacrifices, as men, as Christians, as religious, as priests and more so as missionaries» (IMC Conf., III, 291). The Founder was convinced that the missionary vocation demanded a special commitment to holiness because it is the one that follows more closely the state of life chosen by the Incarnate Word: «The Lord himself has chosen it and if there would have been a life of greater perfection, a better choice of life, he would have chosen that one» (SMC Conf., II, 666).

As you can see, dear young people, the missionary vocation is really “demanding.” It contains within itself some formidable challenges, but these certainly do not scare you, indeed they excite you. To address these challenges one needs much love. For the Founder our vocation demands a boundless love for God and a great love of neighbour. Only then we will be holy missionaries, because, as he used to say, «to love and to be holy is one and the same thing» (SMC Conf., II, 520, cf. IMC Conf., III, 396).

### **On religious consecration**

I think you know the historical progress that our Institute has made at the juridical level: from “religious association” it has become a “society of apostolic life”, and afterwards it became a “religious congregation”. This progress has occurred during the life of our Founder and it was seconded by him, even wanted by him. We can thus say that for us to be “religious”, meaning “consecrated”, is part of our original charisma. It is part of our DNA. During the novitiate, in particular, but also during the years of training you prepare yourselves to the consecrated life, along with the preparation for the priesthood and the mission. Not for nothing the vows are done first as temporary, just to give you a chance to experience in real life your willingness and suitability to live them fully. In the book “I want you to be so” you find the essence of his teaching, which then you can further enhance by reading his Sunday conferences. Now, what I want to

draw your attention to are rather some elements that were dear to our Founder in relation to the consecrated life of the missionaries.

First of all, he conceived consecrated life as the best form of life, the better suited in order to be a missionary. This was his conviction, which stemmed from his own experience and the comparisons which he had made among many other religious and missionary institutes and even among others that were not. In this regard there is the famous conference of October 19, 1919 (IMC Conf., III, 339-340), to which I draw your attention. Consider it in depth, because the reasons that the Founder employs in favour of consecrated life for us missionaries are still valid. I shall simply recall here the general principle that he has expressed in his circular letter dated May 31, 1925: «...[the Institute has chosen the “religious” form motivated by] the desire of forming a more perfect moral body for our sanctification, more appropriate for the evangelization and more suitable for the life of mission» (Letter X, 305-306).

A second element we can find it in the unity between missionary vocation and religious vocation. Keep in mind that our Founder did not divide the vocation in separate areas. According to him our religious vows are themselves “missionary”. Here are his words on the occasion of the renewal of the vows of a nun: «These are the vows of missionaries, so there is need for graces that will be fit for missionaries. When you are making or renewing your vows, you must also think of the souls» (MC Conf., III, 41). And on another occasion, to the novices who were preparing for their profession: «We should have the vow to serve the missions even to the point of death. [...]. When you make your vows, remember that among the three vows there is also this fourth one...» (MC Conf., I, 434).

The third element that I wish to stress is that for Allamano, religious consecration is characterized by the “totality” of the gift done to God. Following the ascetic culture of his time, he spoke this way: «He who is religious does not give God only the work, but he gives him the tree, the root of all the works» (IMC Conf., III, 340th.); «He who makes a vow is obliged to stand firm [...], he still offers the freedom of acting differently; he gives to God not only the fruit, but even the plant» (MC Conf., III, 91). This means that, as religious, we have a further guarantee of achieving our missionary identity, which by its nature is “total” and “lifelong” (cf. Decree Ad Gentes, 17).

You see, being missionaries and religious is a special gift, but also a demanding commitment. Do you remember the slogan so popular in our Institute, “First saints and then missionaries”? Now the same slogan, according to the mind of the Founder, may be expressed with these other words: “first religious and then missionaries”. He himself has said this sentence. Religious consecration, in fact, if lived consistently, leads to holiness of life and, therefore, is a necessary and logic condition for the missionary service. So our Father used to say: «If you then want to be missionaries in good standing, you must first be excellent religious; before converting others, we ourselves must be holy» (IMC Conf., III, 342).

### **To grow, living in interculturality**

On the very current issue of interculturality I think I have written enough in the common circular. Note that this is an open topic on which the talk is never completed. Our attitude is to be sensitive, realistic, open and, let’s frankly say it, generous when we need to accept even some inconveniences. Interculturality is not simply a new and more efficient model, perhaps in order to set up our present internationality or at least maintain it conflict-free as much as possible. Interculturality in the spirituality of our Institute, according to me, means much more, namely the call for a deeper vision of the present pluralistic world, in continuous evolution, and of the people who inhabit it, regardless of language, culture and religion, a vision that is consistent with the “Christian contemplation with open eyes”. This vision must also be considered in the interpersonal relationships within our formative communities. I ask you to make this great topic an object of your community and

personal reflection, not in a merely theoretical sense, but also practical, bearing in mind the outlines and addresses linked to the Founder, as I have tried to explain in the other circular letter.

Dear young people, you are privileged in this respect, because your communities are in fact international and therefore intercultural. You can form yourselves and grow in the experience of interculturality. Your generation, once it will have grown adult, cannot fail to be intercultural, provided though that you will now work with intelligence and generosity. In our novitiates and houses of formation the signs of interculturality are already numerous and obvious. I invite you to continue along the path taken by doing your best. In a world characterized by cultural diversity, it is the prophetic task of the Church and ours, as an Institute, to offer new exemplary models of community life to this pluralistic world.

There may be the risk that by committing ourselves to the various cultures, gradually we may underestimate or neglect our origin and tradition. Let us remember that everything has its value. The tree is kept alive and producing fruit, if it preserves its roots alive and healthy. The future Consolata Missionaries will necessarily be an intercultural family, but with all the values and the unchanged spirit of Allamano. This ideal is challenging. It deserves to be pursued.

## **CONCLUSION**

At the end of this letter, my dear young people, I wish to propose to you an interesting exercise, which involves making a “comparison” with the Founder, alive and everlasting. To be effective, this comparison should be done frequently, not just once, and in a practical way, vital and suitable for the particular moment that one is experiencing.

“Comparing” with the Founder means accomplishing a first-rate formation action, provided you know how to place yourselves before him, just the way you are, letting yourselves be known and questioning him, perhaps discussing with him in order to respond to him afterwards. The answers, however, must not be given out on your own, using your imagination. They must be objective, containing the truth of the spirit of the Founder. To say: “Today, the Founder would have said this to me or would have acted so...” can be handy. So that it may also be true, it requires genuine interior dispositions that would make it impossible to “cheat”. In addition to knowledge, it is essential to have “wisdom”, and this virtue is given to us by the Spirit. So, before you confront yourselves with the Founder, in addition to the awareness of knowing him, his historicity, his thoughts, you have to “pray” in order to have light and strength: light to prevent mistakes, strength so as not to turn away and pretend of not having understood. The Founder, even today, is not asking the impossible, but coherence, in the atmosphere of enthusiasm that he has always proposed to his missionaries.

When Allamano was with us on this earth, personally he assured this comparison with the community and the individuals, through his formative work. He knew everyone personally. Now, he continues to ensure this comparison through his inspiration. Today as then, those who are his disciples are required to be active, accepting his teaching, following his proposals, comparing with him their own life and work. He who does not realize this existential contact of knowledge, discipleship and comparison because he is negligent or not interested, he is placing himself outside his influence. We can compare this person to those who, during the Founder’s earthly life, were lazy, distracted or cold and did not want to follow him. Undoubtedly, none of them became a Consolata Missionary or, if he had become one, he was so only in a juridical sense, but not in his vocational identity.

I am sure that your contact with him, whom you consider “Father” of your vocation, during this year 2010, will have a special place. For this to happen in full for each one of you, I assure you of my prayers to the Consolata and the Founder, to whom I ask a special blessing on our novitiates and houses of formation, which are the future of our missionary Family.

*Fr. Aquiléo Fiorentini, imc  
Father General*

**Lord,**  
*we thank you for our Founder,  
Blessed Joseph Allamano.  
As a father and master  
He taught us to be missionaries  
In family spirit and holiness of life.  
Help us,*