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The Superior Generals' Letter

BLESSED JOSEPH ALLAMANO

December 1, 2002

My dearest brothers and sisters,

This is the beginning of the 2002-2003 Liturgical Year and I am certain that all of us are preparing for the coming of the Lord with renewed joy and commitment. I would invite you to reflect on a theme that is close to the heart of our two institutes. A few days before he died our Blessed Founder made a promise: "I will work from heaven – I will work!" "I will do more there than I do here."¹ We might ask ourselves – how do we perceive his presence today? Do we feel him close and active? Is he still a point of reference for each individual and each community? Do we follow his criteria when we make decisions in our lives and our apostolate? Do we ask his intercession with confidence? Have we the honor and the courage to present him to people as a model and a protector?

We know that our two missionary families are faithful to a Father of whom we are proud and who we "would not exchange for anyone else,"² but deep in our heart we know we could be more attached to our roots. We could live the values of Allamano's missionary charism more intensely and share them with others. He received this charism from the Holy Spirit and passed it on in its entirety to his sons and daughters in the hope that they would live it, cultivate it and share it with others. These charismatic values can be found in Allamano's life and teaching and that is why we are making this meditation – looking at Allamano from this special perspective.

The contents of this letter were developed within the two General Councils and are addressed jointly to both men and women missionaries. Our Founder is Father of both sons and daughters; he loves and looks after them in the same way, without distinction. He wants them to follow a common path with the same missionary and religious spirit he gave them as an inheritance. It is always very moving to hear again the magnificent words of his last will – addressed to his "dear men and women missionaries". "I have lived these many years for you. For you I have consumed my property, my health and my life. By dying I hope to become your protector in heaven." (*Lettere X*, 540). We have already experienced Blessed Allamano's precious protection – both in our own lives and in the lives of those who are dear to us.

In this spirit we are making some suggestions that can help us live our communion with the Father Founder more intensely; these suggestions may help us involve all those people who share our spiritual riches and enjoy his intercession with God and our Mother, the Consolata.

1. "Let your light shine before men." (Mt 5,16)

We believe that Blessed Allamano is a lamp that should not be put under a bushel but on a lampstand so that it can give light to the Church. Although we never met him here on earth, through

¹ Testimonials of Sisters Paola Rossi and Giuseppina Tempo

² Testimonial of Father Guido Bartorelli.

study and the perceptions of the heart we feel close to him. Now, thank God, we can know him well and be in a position to spread his genuine message. The people of God have a right to this message – Allamano belongs to the whole Church. We, his sons and daughters, must spread this message and make him ever better known. We must not keep this light to ourselves; we must not lock it up inside our Institutes.

Here are some suggestions.

On February 16

The Liturgical Feast of Blessed Allamano should be preceded by a novena, triduum or other appropriate exercise that illustrates his life and holy witness. These exercises should be celebrated with great solemnity and wherever possible include forms of popular piety that will involve the local Christian community. Let us renew the beautiful tradition of recalling his life, his teaching and his missionary insights on his feast day. The communities of both men and women missionaries should actively work together to prepare and celebrate this holy day.

16th of every month

Let us take advantage of this date to involve our friends and the Christian communities entrusted to our care. We must put renewed emphasis on celebrating this date – it should become a fixed point of spiritual encounter for everyone: the sons and daughters of Allamano and the whole Christian people. When the liturgy allows it we should use the votive Mass of Blessed Allamano on this day, especially in our parishes and places of public worship. All those who are close to us must realize that the 16th is a special day for us – and consequently for them as well. The General Office of Postulation will send out study aids on this subject.

Catechism and Preaching

We should make frequent reference to Blessed Allamano's teaching in our evangelization. We should do the same in our work with retreats and days of recollection. Including Allamano in our talks can be simple and straightforward. Experience has taught us that his ideas and spiritual, apostolic insights are appreciated by all who know them. Sons and daughters do not mention their father frequently or willingly – is it because they love him?

Publications on Allamano

Let us take advantage of the many publications that illustrate about Allamano and present so many different facets of his personality. Through his letters and Sunday conferences we have the rare privilege of access to his rich and practical thought – something many envy us. This is precious material and we do well to share it with others. It is a gift. This is especially true for those of us in close contact with priests, seminarians, consecrated persons, novices. Let us not forget that Allamano was a born teacher for everyone who is called to follow Christ closely and be His minister.

His Image

We have an abundance of holy cards with the picture of Allamano accompanied by a quotation. We should avail ourselves of these low-level and simple means to spread his message and make his face familiar to many. A short but professional documentary film on the Founder is about to appear. It is done in Italian but we are contemplating translation into other languages. It is a modern and effective way of making Allamano better known.

2. “This is how you should pray.” (Mt 6,9)

Our Father was a man of deep interior life and a master of prayer. Who has not visited the small choir chapel at the Consolata to see the place where he spent long hours in adoration? To those preaching retreats he suggested that they include this idea, “I want to pray well and often” (*Conf IMC*, III, 611). In this he was on the same wavelength as Jesus who would retire to solitary places to pray and who told his followers “pray always without tiring” (*Lk* 18,1). What we would like to emphasize here is that our

Founder is now in heaven, he intercedes with God for all those who call upon him. We can pray God through the intercession of Allamano, and pray Allamano to intercede for us with God.

We would like to offer a few simple suggestions on this subject as well.

Pray through the intercession of Allamano

At present we are accustomed to reciting the traditional or new formulas of prayers common to our Institutes. In these prayers we address Our Heavenly Father through Allamano and speak of things closest to our hearts. To address God through the heart of our Father Founder seems to us a familial and effective way to pray. Let us continue and strengthen this custom: it keeps us in close contact with our Founder who prays with us and for us.

Teach the faithful to pray like Allamano

There are so many reasons to turn to God: praise, thanksgiving, pleading for pardon, asking for help, etc. Allamano's teachings on prayer are especially rich and we know them well. Let us spread this knowledge to our people – we have no doubt that this is prayer with substance, prayer that corresponds to the spirit of the Church. We should place particular emphasis on Allamano's "special favorites" – the Eucharist and Our Lady. The faithful will be happy to become disciples of our Founder – a wise master of prayer.

Graces and favors

In times of special need let us teach people to make their requests for favors and graces through the intercession of Allamano. Let us never forget that the Founder is "always at the *pugiol* [balcony]" as he promised during his life (Cf. *Conf. IMC*, II, 482). He looks upon us from the balcony, waiting, ready to listen to us and to all those in need of divine assistance. It is a beautiful thing to see a Consolata Missionary praying to Our Heavenly Father together with a person in need, and asking for the intercession of their Founder.

3. "If you have faith ... nothing is impossible" (Mt 17,20)

We have a special reason for writing this letter. We feel the need to ask everyone to pray with faith and perseverance that Allamano will ask God to grant the miracle that will bring about the canonization we so long for. Thanks to all those who worked with love and intelligence the process of Beatification at the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints has come to a happy conclusion. Now all we need is a valid miracle, approved in the usual fashion, and the Pope will proclaim our Founder, a Saint. We are all hoping earnestly for this to happen, because we are certain of his holiness and we think he should be held up to the whole Church as a model of spiritual life and apostolic, missionary dedication.

Allamano himself had a similar experience when it came to the beatification of his uncle, Giuseppe Cafasso. If we look through his voluminous correspondence with the Postulator of the Cause we will quickly become aware of how much effort he put into the two miracles necessary at that time. At a certain point he went so far as to write to the Postulator, "Tell the Venerable that he has to begin producing miracles or else ..." (*Lettere*, IV, 663). After the beatification a few Cardinals remarked, "Now it's up to you to make him a saint – to find the miracles" (*Conf. IMC*, III, 723). Certainly Allamano prayed a great deal and had others pray for miracles through the intercession of Cafasso. He was especially insistent with his sons and daughters. When he presented the students at the Motherhouse with a relic of his uncle his words were especially significant, "Don't be afraid to ask for favors – even really big miracles" (*Conf. IMC*, II, 606). On rare occasions he was even known to say things like, "This blessed man just won't work miracles and we have to suffer as a consequence. Maybe he'll work them later ... but we need them now!" (*Conf. IMC*, III, 536). In reality we really don't know which is more impressive – the founder's desire for miracles or his willingness to abide by God's will. These words on his return from Cafasso's beatification in Rome express a certain satisfaction: "Now they want to make him a saint. The Cardinals insist [...] and you've to ask him favors – he likes this and he grants them willingly. But since this is not enough, you have to ask for material favors – above all surgical miracles (make a novena, or even two or three, don't give up). Ask for a genuine apostolic spirit" (*Conf. IMC*, III,

723). Now we are in the same situation and our immediate goal is Allamano's canonization. We turn to him with that same faith and stubbornness he had – but also with his willingness to abide by God's will.

What we suggest in this regard is very simple.

Pray for a Miracle

Above all let us pray for a miracle through the intercession of our Founder. We come into contact with so many desperate situations, with so many sick people. We must think immediately of asking his protection and intercession. If we have faith nothing is impossible.

Urge people to do the same

Let us share the confidence we have in Allamano's intercession with others. As was the case with the beatification – a miracle in a missionary area would be especially fitting for Allamano who very much loved those people to whom he sent his sons and daughters. We are sending you an outline for a novena along with this letter. Regional Superiors of both Institutes should see that it is translated into the local languages so that it can be distributed and used.

Keep us informed of favors received

Finally we would ask everyone to inform the appropriate offices in the two Institutes of any favor received through Allamano's intercession so that it can be publicized – for the glory of God and our Founder.

We conclude our letter by turning to Our Lady, the Consolata, who has always shown a special love for this son of hers. She made him her “treasurer” so that he could obtain for us the grace to grow in love and communion at his side – and if it is God's will, to venerate him soon with the whole Church as a “Saint.”

In the name of the General Councils, we greet you fraternally,

Father Piero Trabucco, IMC
(*Superior General*)

Mother Gabriella Bono, MC
(*Superior General*)

The General Council's letters

POVERTY, ECONOMY AND MISSION

October 4, 2002

Dear Missionaries,

The date of this letter is October 4, the day of St. Francis, the saint that is a famous witness to the evangelical ideals in the use of the goods of this earth. May the "Poverello of Assisi" arouse in each one of us, and in our Religious Family as a whole wherever it missions, a deep sense of fidelity to the vow of poverty, and the courage to handle the material goods we have at our disposal with the wisdom that Blessed Joseph Allamano lived and preached to us.

Why This Document

Why a new letter on the use of goods in our mission, and which are the reasons behind the invitation made to us by the X General Chapter (XGC) to deal again with this matter? I shall mention some of them.

Our most recent General Chapters have insisted on the need for our Institute to review the criteria that regulate the use of our material goods because they are gifts from God and the expression of the charity of our Benefactors, and are at the service of the mission (See the General Chapter of 1987, p. 50). They also warned us against any disregard of the vow of poverty in the administration of goods (See GC 1993, 19). At the same time, they urged us to aim at a more radical way of practicing poverty. They invited us to come closer to the life of the poor and to a better sharing of goods with the others (GC 1993, 54-55). Finally, the XCG acknowledged that there still exist forms of individualism in the use of the goods of the community, and that there also is a pursuit of material goods: these things divert from a more evangelical way of living the mission (XCG 37). And so the Chapters invite the Regions to remedy these possible abuses. They also invite the General Direction to send to the whole Institute a document in which be made a "Strong call to order on the way we live poverty and on the diverse abuses found everywhere in our Institute, abuses which were summarily mentioned in the examination of the reality. In the preparation of this document, what was said in the capitular assemblies on the subject must also be kept in mind." It further reminds us that "The times of our jubilees are a good occasion to appropriately reflect on this topic as well as other topics that are connected with sharing, equality, detachment; using the goods intended for the missions and the poor in all respect for the donors' intentions and without any excessive or unjustified delay" (XGC 40-41).

Among consecrated people, a need for clear courses of action is felt at present: Clear directions are needed in a world that is rushing towards globalization; a world in which often the search for profit and ownership becomes an imperative style of life while, at the same time, sensitivity towards the poor shrinks way down; a world in which the ambition to become rich fast and quick penalizes the human value of both individuals and society. Missionaries who work with the poor and the marginalized in the suburbs of the big cities continuously wish to refine their engagements as witnesses to the evangelical value of poverty. In order to do that, they want to use scrupulously the goods that Divine Providence puts in their hands in favor of the poor and as a means of missionary conscientization of the Church. There's an always increasing number of missionaries who wonder whether it wouldn't be better to pay more attention to the challenges the vow of poverty throws at us. Also, what answer are we to give to the Church that continually incites us to requalify the way we are and operate in the missions? The Letter prepared by the Union of the General Superiors in their meeting of May 2002 dealt precisely with the topic, "Economy and Mission". It did so because many Institutes feel today the urgency of reflecting on the correct use of goods in a world that at present evolves and revolves ever so rapidly. They felt the need

to evaluate whether their economic praxis is a true answer to the vow of poverty and a real choice for the poor³.

The Need for a Renewed Praxis

If our Institute wants to embark into a journey of authentic personal renewal, and make a decisive turn-around to requalify our community, it needs to come seriously face to face with the demands of the Gospel and with the religious consecration in the area of material goods and how we use them in our behavior and activities as missionaries. Poverty and mission can never be severed from one another: When that happens, our credibility and the outcome of our work are seriously compromised.

Nearly sixteen years have gone by since the coming out of the circular letter “*The Use of Material Goods for the Mission*” (May 1, 1985). In it, Fr. G. Inverardi developed this topic, offering precious suggestions relative to the correct use of material goods. What was written then still has the same value today. But some situations need different answers nowadays. The new challenges of today need appropriate solutions, and the principles and the ideals proper to the vow of poverty must be carefully revisited.

The title of this letter itself explains its purpose and objective. It will not deal with religious poverty only, although it takes its inspiration abundantly from it, and it isn't a *Directory for the Administration of Goods* either. It stands somewhere between a reflection on the principles that regulate the use of goods and their concretization in the multiple situations our Institute finds itself in.

Difficulties and Limitations

We must also acknowledge that to write on this topic for the whole Institute is a rather engaging task. It's not easy to offer directives that give precise answers to all the realities that all our confreres live across this world of ours. Consider some of the following questions: How can we apply the same rules on poverty and economy to our confreres living in Europe and North America, and our confreres who live in Congo? To our missionaries living in developed countries and those who live in countries where the people have to fight every day in order to have what they need to barely survive? How can we give directives concerning the formation in our seminaries on how live our poverty when, in some instances, coming into our Institute is for some youngsters a promotion in the rich world? How can we teach sobriety and austerity to candidates whose families and environment never denied them any material goods, or place any encumbrance to their use?

We are aware of the limitations of a document like this one. But we do think that it can inspire all members to reflect and focus on the meaning of the vow of poverty within the context of our missionary vocation, that it can help us review the usages we make of material goods. Since we are aware of the complexity of this matter and of its many facets, we shall try to write in rather schematic fashion, dealing only with essentials. Not every problem will have a definite answer. Maybe, some of our questions will keep on being just that. The style of incompleteness of this document will allow the individual missionary, the local communities and the provinces to continue the reflection: While doing this, each one will keep in mind the context and the real situations he lives in. To favor this system, we have often included questions that might stimulate a reflection by the whole local community, questions that might stir it to come up with appropriate answers to local problems and situations.

May the intercession of our Blessed Founder encourage our reflection and, through his own witnessing, enlighten the paths we have to travel on.

I. SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES

“Seek The First the Kingdom of God...”

All through the Old Testament, “poverty”, as a value that must be lived, does not mean renunciation to, or lack of, material goods, but rather an attitude of submission and surrender to God, and a search for His will during the trials of life. The teachings and the life of Jesus show to perfection what poverty is. In Jesus, the old idea that riches are a blessing from God and the lack of goods a punishment for the evils

³ See *Economia e Missione nella Vita Consacrata, oggi*. Unione Superiori Generali, May 2002.

done, is surpassed. For Jesus, the important thing is the Kingdom, and everything else must relate to it. Poverty is not material “misery”, but rather the overcoming of the pretext of not needing God, and the pretext of managing one’s life without interference from anyone else, and of building , alone, one’s own “kingdom”. Before asking people to detach themselves from material things, Jesus asks them to detach themselves *from themselves*, from their own ways of . wishing and desiring, from their emotions. He is the one who steadfastly underlines the need for gentleness of heart, for humility, for availability and forgiveness, for submission to God, for freedom from the goods of this world. This value lies not as much in the absence of possessions, but rather in freedom from them, so that we can be interdependent and become gift to others: something attainable if we look at God as a Provident Father who takes good care of us.

The poor of the Gospel is the person who seeks God’s Kingdom and its justice before everything else, the one who finds in God the true treasure of his life (See Mt 6:31-34). Poor is the one who is available to get rid of every thing in order to obtain that treasure, the one who is afraid that God and His Kingdom will no longer be found if his heart becomes full of the goods of this world.

Looked at through the eyes of the Kingdom, how do material goods appear to us? They are not objects of contempt, they should be seen as realities that must not enslave us (See Mt 5:29-30), because man is much wordier than things are (Mt 16:26). Whoever lets things seize him, loses his freedom and loses sight of the Kingdom. The Gospel man uses things that can be of use in the building of the Kingdom, but knows how to go without them in order to set his sight and his heart on realities that are truly important. There he is: a man who is free, not so much from material goods as he is free for, or at the disposal of, the Kingdom.

From the Gospel blossom forth some lines of behavior which are a must for every disciple of Jesus: The more one becomes rich in the things of the Kingdom, the more one becomes poor in the things of this world. A progressive renouncing to material goods strengthens one’s being in Christ, but the possession of things of this earth develops a craving for power and diminishes the capacity of serving the others and makes one veer away from the logics of the Kingdom. In this light, the announcement by Jesus, “Blessed are the poor!” becomes easy to understand: blessed, not because they are poor, but because they did not allow themselves to be caught by things, but became full of the fullness of God. Because they did not entrust their own fulfillment to material things and did not give to things their own fulfillment, they became people of the future!

An Inheritance We Must Not Forfeit

We are sons of a man of God, Joseph Allamano. His life tells us where the true treasure is, the real treasure. Meaning, he led to maturity for us the behavior of the wise administrator of the Gospel. Matured, himself, in the school of holiness of the Cottolengo, he developed an unlimited confidence in the Providence of God. He would throw his whole being into developing daring projects because he always found out first what God’s will was. Meaning, he was sure that God would not abandon him (See Conf II, 308). His suggestion to his missionaries was: “As you begin any new enterprise, you should not consider its magnitude, nor the difficulties in translating it into reality, nor should you consider the amount of work needed to concretize it: you must simply find out whether it is God’s will. Then dive into it, it will succeed.”⁴ Such trust in the Lord gave him an adventurous sense of enterprise, gave him courage because he felt that he was an instrument in the hands of a Father who never abandons his children. At the same time, all through his life he used discretion towards the benefactors, even when the expenses of the running of the Institute became huge. He urged his missionaries never to bug benefactors by proclaiming to the four winds the needs of the mission, and to avoid being fanatic fund-raisers. He once quipped when some untimely initiatives were begun: “No! No! I don’t like it. I don’t like merchant priests. There are enough of those in the diocese. I don’t want you, my sons, to act the same way.” (Ib. 28).

He was always aware that the money he used was not his own: He always considered himself its administrator, not its owner. And he urged his missionaries to do the same. One day he told Fr. Ciravegna: “Get used to carry some money in your pocket, and learn how to always think that it is not yours, but that it belongs to the Benefactors of the missions. This way, you will think twice when you feel like spending it.” (Ib. 35). He will often tell and retell these ideas, almost as a catchword, underlining an

⁴ G. Pasqualetti, *Poveri per arricchire gli altri*, Roma 1988, pg. 21.

important principle to teach a correct use of material goods: “Donations do not come to us for our own comfort, so that we may live better, but that the others may feel better. When we have what we need, that’s enough... Don’t say: ‘Well, we’ve got the money...’ You must have money in order to do good, not to live well. As the Lord sends them to us, let’s do good works!” (Ib. 38).

Transparency and prudence in the realm of administration were scrupulously practiced by Joseph Allamano, and he demanded the same from his missionaries. In his book, Fr. G. Pasqualetti narrates several experiences of missionaries in this area (Ib. 41-44). They were all deeply impressed by his scrupulous precision in the registration and administration of donations to the Institute. Some of them say: “In the administration, he was most precise; he would enter every donation with utmost accuracy... and he would do it immediately, while the person who brought the money in, or took it out, was still there in his presence” (Ib. 42).

Here is a witnessing by Fr. Sales on the Founder’s ideas concerning just salaries and respect for civil laws: “He was always extremely scrupulous in questions related to justice. He couldn’t cheat his neighbor out of one penny. He declared that he was ready to be cheated a little bit, rather than run the risk of cheating others. His and anyone’s spiritual and moral goods were always more important to him than material goods” (Ib. 44).

The sharing of goods was another preoccupation of the Founder. “If we do not economize,” he would tell the professed students, “what are we going to send to Africa? We should only use the strictly necessary, we cannot keep everything for ourselves” (Conf. II, 252). It was because of the demands of sharing that he was convinced that missionaries can never be rich (Conferences to the Sisters II, 6).

Paying Attention to the Calls of the Poor

The masses of the poor in Third World countries too question us on how we use material goods in the contexts of our missionary work. Even our Constitutions decided to attach the demands of the vow of poverty to the calls from the poor: “Let the missionary grow in an authentic love for evangelical poverty through a constant conversion of heart and attitudes, so that he will ‘possess the spirit of poverty’ down to its roots” (SL, 242). This way, he will witness to his trust in the Providence of our Heavenly Father (See Mt 6:25-34), he will show that he is interdependent with the poor and that he possesses the freedom to raise his voice in their defense. In unison with the community, he is encouraged to live even more austere forms of poverty, in accordance with the demands of the milieu where he lives” (Const. 44).

Two paths has the post-conciliar Church delineated and trod, although not always in too easy a way: To become credible and understandable on the inside, through the removal of all useless superstructures and the elimination of connivance with “power”; and engaging itself in transforming the institutions and all unjust and alienating structures. All this comes under the name *preferential option for the poor* (See *Evangelization and Human Promotion*, 13; *Vita Consecrata*, 82, 90).

When a Christian community gives back the primacy to the Kingdom of God, it feels driven to “Evangelize the poor” (See Luke 4:16-21), it shares with them its life and everything else. Such a choice is not contingent, rather, it reflects one of its constitutional exigencies; and it has its roots in the Gospel itself. It is not sectarian, because meeting Christ brings the Christian close to the poor and to all those who need salvation. To choose the poor, means to share their lot, to identify with their struggles, to raise the voice to defend them, to pay in person for the choice of camp.

As missionaries and consecrated people, the service to the poor and the sharing of their lot must become part of our nature, so as to become the *cartina di tornasole* of our choice of Christ and his Kingdom: “The choice for the poor is inherent to the dynamics of love lived according to Christ. Consequently, all disciples of Christ are bound to it. However, those who want to follow Christ more closely, those who want to imitate His attitudes, cannot but feel involved in a special way in this cause. The sincerity of their answer to the love of Christ guides them to live as poor persons and to embrace the cause of the poor” (VC 82). The same ideas are stressed by *Redemptoris Missio*: “The first addressees of the mission are the poor, and their evangelization is a par excellence sign and proof of the mission of Christ (60).

II. NEED FOR DISCERNMENT

Money And Mission: A Not Always Easy Relationship

A few decades ago during the colonial rule in Africa, and also more recently during the economic boom in the Western World, it came natural to many missionaries to confront the reality of well-being in many European countries and the precarious situation in mission territories. In the context of mission promotion, it was easy to paint in dark tones the state of poverty in mission territories, so as to stir up the generosity of Christians in Europe and North America.

With the passing of time, and after some not too positive experiences, the rapport between missionary and money and other material means became more cautious, if not outright pessimistic. Missionaries understood that money could not always solve the complex problems of social justice; also, the structures raised at the cost of much sweat and with the sacrifices of the benefactors, often did not measure up to the foreseen objectives, and sometimes even acted like boomerangs against the missionaries. Private interests too, corruption, bureaucracy and alike contributed to render useless “our work”. Notwithstanding our efforts and our originality and imagination that would often come up with new mechanisms of development, it was clear that these things did not change much the lot of the poor.

If we consider the problem from the standpoint of the “mother” Churches, missionaries often felt a certain malaise in front of this praxis, and not because it was hard for them to beg for the poor. They became aware that the problem “money” often monopolized their mission dialogue, so much so that to say ‘mission’ was, for many Christians, equal to saying ‘money’. How could they efficiently communicate to God’s people such messages as: mission means to announce Christ, we’re all responsible for the mission, Christ still calls to the mission...? And how could they propose to today’s society such themes as justice, solidarity, peace...?

The generosity of the Christian people towards the poor, and the collections taken up in their favor, do have New-Testamental roots. Christian generosity and collections for the poor were not on the defendant’s bench. The critical sensitivity against money and other means for the missions was caused by the excessive emphasis placed on them, or because of a lack of moderation that lowered the importance of other values.

Here are some of the main challenges that often come up in this area, that come up every time we ponder our relationship with material goods in the context of our missionary work:

- An excessive flowing of aid might slow down the maturing of young Christian communities that, rather than teaching their own members to become self-sufficient, keep on leaning on means collected somewhere else.
- Missionary work risks losing its transparency and evangelical witnessing to the eyes of neophytes and non-Christians. Unfortunately, what often is more easily noticed in missionary work is not human and Christian solidarity towards the other brethren, but rather a certain climate of business and easy riches.
- An evangelization that is accompanied by lots of money and many other material means does not develop a sense of responsibility in the faithful. The Church is not sensed as one’s “home”. Furthermore, the Christian community does not feel spurred on to face the challenges and problems proper to their milieu, because there always is someone on top who thinks things out, someone who makes the decisions and puts them into practice...
- The missionary who is rich might build defensive barriers that isolate and protect him from the people: thus, he avoids situations of precariousness and poverty because he wants to shun any danger. The rich tend to seek isolation, create ghettos and build superiority pedestals. It is difficult indeed to establish mutual trust relationships and rapports of true friendship and fraternity between the ‘rich’ missionary and the poor.
- Internationality is growing in our Institute: some missionaries keep on living as the rich do, barriers will be erected among members of our missionary family. This will have harmful consequences on the family spirit and on the work of evangelization.

The Courage of Conversion

Our behavior in doing mission is not to be dictated by psychological motives, and our life style should not be imposed by strategical schemes. To be sure, today we are sent to do mission by the One who told His missionaries: “Go! Behold I am sending you as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals. Stay in that house, eat and drink what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go back and forth from house to house” (Luke 10:3, 7). Jesus’ teaching, His style of life and His way of evangelizing: These things must guide us in fashioning our apostolic methodology. This we must do while keeping in touch with the realities of modern times, with today’s challenges and the present world. From Vatican II on, the Church has always encouraged Religious Orders and Congregations to live a more austere way of life and a better adherence to the evangelical value of poverty. Our Constitutions and many other documents of our Institute during these past years have kept on calling us to live a different style of life that will help us concretize a more efficient kind of evangelization. Keeping in mind what was said above, and examining it in the light of our documents, we are now going to recall, briefly, some doctrinal directives relative to the use of material goods:

1. We read in St. Paul that, “When the time had fully come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might receive adoption as sons” (Gal 4:4-5). The mystery of the Incarnation is the basis of the Christian announcement and the direction that every apostolic praxis must follow. His mystery seems to suggest that power, efficiency, success and material means cannot be the measure, the criteria and the strength of missionary strategy. The Word of God became a man, but He also became a child, helpless, needy. Wanting to fulfill the mission the Father gave Him, He used the means that poor people know how to use, and not those that would make Him popular, that would give Him an image, make Him efficient. When Peter tries to dissuade Him from going ahead with His plan, the Master uses strong words (Cfr. Mark 8:39-39), because He wants the same kind of mission to be used by his disciples: “As you sent me into the world, so I send them” (John 17:18). In Matthew we read: “Whoever does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it” (Mt 10:38-39). The cross was the way Christ chose to save us. But he also chose it as the way to be used by anyone who follows Him in bringing salvation to the world: The cross that saves, the cross that reconciles, and the cross that also kills, that divides, that causes persecution.
2. From the cathedra of our “abundance” we will never be able to preach the cross of Jesus Christ to the masses of the poor, we won’t be able to give credibility and meaning to the words of the Gospel. We can then ask ourselves: How will our way of doing mission be judged by the cross of Jesus Christ? The missions that we form, often effort at the cost of much, will they attract the attention of people because they are similar to the style of mission that Jesus wanted to communicate through his cross? “God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise. God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are” (1 Cor 1:27-28). Thus expresses his credo the convert of the way to Damascus, the greatest missionary of the primitive Church. Power, wisdom, things of this world – they are not the things that save. We can’t fool people by giving them our ‘things’: God alone saves! “When I am weak, that’s when I am strong” (2 Cor 12:10): Pauline logics destroys many of our buildings in efficiency, our attempts to self-fulfillment, our wishes of vainglory.
3. Evangelization is our *suprema lex*. Above any other interest, personal or not, we should welcome whatever favors and helps evangelization. Efficiency will never prevail over whatever renders apostolic works authentic, just as evangelical witnessing must always be above any project and action of ours. Courageously, we must ask ourselves whether the time has come to get rid of certain weights and hurdles that we pile up on our evangelizing tracks, as asked by our IX General Chapter: “To follow a style of life that is poor in its structures and simple in its work programs and in the use of material goods, and to listen to the queries and the sensibility of the poor” (32.1). Resisting these capitular directives could be caused by the culture of consumerism today present everywhere. We must react courageously to this situation, we must appeal to our conscience as disciples and to our apostolic know-how. If we must reach a conversion, it should come from our confrontation with Jesus of Nazareth, not with the milieu or the people that surround us.

4. “Let our missionaries be encouraged, also by the community, to live more austere forms of poverty in relation to the demands of the milieu.” (Constitutions, 44). “We wish that there be among us a greater radicalism in the practice of poverty. In our relationship with God, in our community life, in our apostolic action we intend to share our life with the poor whose values are for us a school of spirituality” (IXGC 54). “The mission is impossible without being ‘for’ and ‘with’ the poor”. “Poverty determines the premises of consecrated life through a sobriety and style of life that favor solidarity, sharing and nearness to people” (XGC, 30). If these statements are to affect our method of action or our apostolic praxis, they must be allowed to generate in us deep convictions which, must have their root in the perennial values of faith in Christ and in consecrated life. Our Constitutions and our General Chapters encourage us to enter into more austere forms of poverty and nearness to the poor. These forms of poverty must find their expression in fraternal and serene acceptance of new experiences that must be approved by our Institute. These experiences, quasi labs for a new way of living the mission and announcing Christ to the peoples, must be favored and encouraged by the Regions in an enlightened and courageous discernment.

Our Institute, together with the Consolata Missionary Sisters, chose for 2003 the Blessed Paolo Manna as our special patron saint. May his teaching, audacious and prophetic in the area of missionary poverty, spur each one to begin a serious revision of his own life, in all fidelity to the missionary vocation and the call of Christ who wants us near to the poor and interdependent with them.

III. LET’S AGAIN VISIT OUR ECONOMIC PRAXIS

At this point of the reflection, we don’t want to “turn the page” and begin talking about a different reality. What was said about the ideal of our religious life, about ways of looking at material goods, about the teaching of the Founder and our choice of the poor, that must enlighten all other aspects relative to the economy in our Institute. It is not possible to read the first part of this letter as ‘Religious’ and the second part as ‘Administrators’. We are individuals that the Lord called to follow Him, people who were sent to evangelize the poor. The goods that the Lord puts in our hands must help us reach this purpose, must aid us to live coherently our vocation.

The pages that follow do not have the purpose to abolish or to take the place of the Directory for the Administration of Goods.⁵ The questions we will deal with aim at recalling certain facets that concern the correct use of goods, questions that need revision and special attention in the present context of the life of our Institute and the mission. For technical and detailed directives, please consult the Directory for the Administration of Goods.

A. Our Providence

As sons of Blessed Allamano, a man who always nurtured the greatest trust in Divine Providence⁶, we believe that, through our benefactors, the Lord will never allow us to lack the material means which we need for our life and for our missionary work. Furthermore, the salaries received by some of our missionaries, the stipends for pastoral services rendered and the income from social pensions constitute other sources of income for the Institute. Some of the Provinces, thanks to Last Wills and productive activities, make possible the work of the General Direction and its yearly contributions to the Provinces. Finally, the care of each missionary in the administrative sphere is a precious and necessary contribution to the concretization of the self-sufficiency of each Province.

The benefactors

Our benefactors are the expression of Divine Providence towards us. As every day we lift prayers to our Heavenly Father that He will keep on giving us our daily bread and all that we need for our sustenance, our activities and our solidarity with the poor, we cannot forget our Benefactors. Besides praying for them every day, each missionary community must keep constant contact with them by mail.

⁵ Cfr. IMC—*Directory for the Administration of Goods*. Rome, General Administration. 1989.

⁶ Cfr. G. Pasqualetti, *Poveri per arricchire gli altri*. IMC, pg. 21-36.

Every donation received must be timely acknowledged and thanked for in writing. Contacts with the benefactors, although marked by a sense of urgency should never lack kindness and discretion.

In this field, there must be coordination at the level of our Institute. Which means that no missionary will ever start any campaign to raise funds without previously obtaining permission to do so from his own Provincial Superior, and permission from the Provincial Superior of the Region where the offerings are to be collected. There must be communication between the missionary who wants to collect funds during his holidays in his country and the people in charge of that Region.

Work

Because of his profession of poverty, “In accordance with a traditional praxis in our Institute, and following the teaching of the Founder, missionaries must appreciate and love work” (Const 16), manual work included. It must always be accompanied by the missionary’s spirit of initiative and laboriousness: this way, the missionary will always express his nearness to the world of the poor to which poverty connects us so deeply.

It is very important that our younger members be formed to, and become imbued of, this spirit. During the formative years, let them be introduced to meaningful work experiences that, opportunely remunerated, will be an economic help to their community. They must also be taught to understand our Family spirit, a spirit that requires each and everyone to be interested in his community and in the whole Institute, which is their new family, even in concrete aspects such as: rendering the house inviting, contributing to the self-sufficiency of the community, participating in the right order of the milieu, using correctly the things that belong to the community.

Salaries, Stipends, Pensions

Salaries, stipends and any income that is the fruit of the work and of the initiative of the missionary belong, by the power of the vow of poverty, to our Institute. Their administration will be regulated by Regional norms or, in their absence, by the directives given by the Regional Superior.

Social pensions, too, and the ones that elderly missionaries receive thanks to special pension payments, belong to our Institute. The missionary must keep a faithful account of them and give regular and periodical accounts to the Regional Superior.

Donations

All donations received by the missionary from benefactors, whatever purpose they might be given for, belong to our Institute and to the mission, and cannot be used by the missionary without the explicit permission of the superior, and then always in accordance with our Constitutions (Cfr. 48.1). In order to ask for donations for special projects, the missionary must have the previous permission of the competent authority. If the offering is given to the single missionary, it becomes part of the common purse, either of the local community or of the regional community, according to the norms that are proper to each Province, exception being when the competent superior decides otherwise. The offerings given without a specific purpose will always become part of the common purse.

Only the offerings given to the missionary by relatives within the fourth degree belong to the missionary personally, as established by our Constitutions. However, the use of those offerings is not left up to the missionary, it is always subject to the approval of the superior.

Mass Offerings

“Missionary priests offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the intentions of the Superior General” (Constitutions 64). They will, periodically, give account of the number of Masses celebrated, of the offerings and of the intentions received. Every Province will give precise norms regulating the reception of offerings and their destination. It is the job of the Regional Superior to receive the reports of the Masses that were celebrated, and to remind the missionaries of this their duty if and when there is lack of interest or refusal in this matter.

The General Administration will provide Mass offerings to the Provinces that do not have enough of them. If there are too many, these offerings will be distributed to the poorest dioceses, rather than to single priests who might ask for them.

Financial Reserves

Building a reserve of funds has become regular praxis in our Institute. Through these reserves, we try to guarantee enough means for the needs of our Institute and the mission. These funds are added to the donations of our benefactors and to the income that comes from the work of our missionaries. Many questions might arise from this system of management of our goods, and the implications of such a system might affect our way of living poverty. It is necessary that we continue to clarify its context and its limits, and to set down directives for the whole Institute. In this letter we shall only give some principles.

1. It is necessary to affirm that our Institute cannot live only on the reserves of funds. Just as do the poor who trust Divine Providence, we must live off what we get from our work, the help from our Benefactors and the internal solidarity of our Institute.
2. The reserves of money that our Institute possesses are usually used to maintain our houses of formation, to take care of our sick members and for our new missionary foundations and openings.
3. Because of the duty of fraternal sharing and the engagement of the common purse, local communities have no permission to capitalize. They can keep a certain amount of money for ordinary and for unforeseen expenses. The limits of this amount of money are decided and fixed by the Direction of the Province. Whatever passes these limits is given to the Regional Administration.
4. The Provinces will accumulate a certain capital. Its interest will be added to the donations by the benefactors and other kinds of income so as to cover the ordinary and extraordinary expenses. The highest limit of these reserves will be established by the General Direction in consultation with the directions of the Provinces.
5. It is the task of the General Administrator and his Council to manage the capital of the Regions, deposited at the General Administration. In so doing, he will always keep in mind the exigency of witnessing to trust in Divine Providence, the needs of our Institute and its missions, and the ethics of investing and of the banks where our funds are deposited.

Donations and Legacies

All donations that are over the competence of the Local Superior need the written authorization of the Superior of the Province before being accepted. Any donation to which an onus is attached has to be given authorization by the Superior General, after consultation of our legal adviser.

All questions relative to real estate and all that comes from inheritances is managed by the Regional Administration through its legal real estate office (if present), in strict contact with the General Administrator. The income from real estate sales and what comes from any inheritance will be thrown into the general fund of the Institute, and afterwards divided by the Provinces.

Solidarity Fund

Quite a while back, the Solidarity Fund was established in our Institute. It takes care of the sick members of the Society, and it is propped up by the 1.5% of the gross income of each Province. In our days, its income has no longer been distributed by the Provinces that have greater debts because of the care of the sick: This will allow the fund to become a true *reserve* that, in the future, will help the confreres who do not have any medical insurance. However, the Provinces that did not have single medical expenses that are superior to a certain established amount that is decided by the General Administration, will be reimbursed: This reimbursement will be taken from the Solidarity Fund.

B. Some Principles that Regulate the Administration of Goods

Administration in Our Institute

This administration is regulated by the vow of poverty. Which means that every norm and directive in the administrative field must always take its inspiration from poverty, must follow its spirit and become concrete in everyday life.

By the force of religious profession, every missionary renounces the use of any material thing and money without the previous and explicit permission from the superior. Because of his religious profession, the member also renounces the use and the managing of his patrimonial goods. Before making his perpetual religious profession, he must also write his will or testament in order to dispose of his goods in an act that also has civil value and effects. These acts can later be changed with the approval of the General Superior. With the permission of the Superior General, a missionary with perpetual vows may

also totally or partially renounce his patrimonial goods. It is opportune that this renunciation take place only after several years of perpetual profession.

Every missionary to whom the task of administering was entrusted must be aware of doing a very important job in favor of our Institute and in favor of every confrere. He should never forget the criteria that must direct everyone of his actions, such as witnessing to poverty, the common good, justice and fraternal charity.

Every administrator exercises his service under the responsibility of his respective superior: Local Superior, Superior of a Province or General Superior. As far as the administration of goods is concerned, the job of superior and of administrator must never be reversed or confused. Permissions in the area of the vow of poverty are the responsibility of the superior. The one who administers is the administrator and not the superior. A clear separation of the two roles assures a sane reciprocal control.

Austerity in Everyday Life

The society we live in, influenced as it is by an unrestrained sense of consumerism, challenges our style of life, a style that must find and use certain concrete and visible ways of living poverty in everyday life. Clothes, traveling, holidays, means of transportation, everything must reflect the austerity of life proper to a missionary. The same way, our houses and the means that we use to do our work must be inspired by functionality and simplicity.

Every community should use discernment before it decides on a big expense relative to their life. An important criterium to determine our life style is the sharing of our life with people among which we live and work. A practical means that well translates the austerity of our life is the attention we must pay to the budget of the expenses incurred and the study of the budget: Both ordinary and extraordinary expenses must be studied. The budget must be prepared and evaluated by the community itself before being presented to be approved by the superior authority. Ordinarily, this should be done at the moment of the writing of the PCL. It is opportune that periodical moments of revision be also established.

Every Province establishes the amount of money that the single communities can use without further permission from the Regional Direction. The same applies to the modalities that pertain to the buying and the alienation of things.

The General Directory of our Institute establishes, in very clear and detailed fashion, the instances when the missionary may return to his own country (Const 25.3, 25.5). The Superiors of the Provinces must see to it that these norms are scrupulously followed and that any kind of abuse that is contrary to our state of religious and the vow of poverty be avoided.

It is the praxis of our Institute, and it has been ratified by the General Directory, that “No missionary may possess a car for personal use. The use of cars is communitary and is regulated by to the demands of the offices and services of the community” (45.1).

The General Directory establishes also that no missionary may “Have accounts in the bank set to his name outside the administrations of the Institute” (48.2). However, at present, in some Provinces, there are confreres who might be asked to have a personal account in a bank for their personal administration. In such cases, the written permission must be asked from the Regional Superior. The latter will see to it that for everyone of these personal bank accounts there be a second signature. The missionaries must give a regular and periodic account to their respective superiors on how they use these bank accounts.

Personal Savings

This name is applied to the amount of money that each missionary receives from his own community for his ordinary expenses. Such amount of money is not to be given to the missionaries on established periodical dates, but it is renewed upon presentation of the account of the expenses made previously.

It is good that in our formative communities, professed students be educated to the correct use of the ‘Personal Savings’, and avoid even the appearance that it be considered as some sort of “monthly salary” that each one may use according to his whims.

Faithfulness to Civil Laws and the Directives of the Local Church

The missionary will be careful to observe not only the administrative norms emanated for our Institute, but also those coming from the civil society and the Church. This, our Founder wanted his missionaries to do. Scrupulous attention to laws and norms is not only a positive answer to the demands

of justice, it also becomes a very necessary witnessing to the society in which we live. Without naming every instance in which this faithfulness must be exercised, we recall here some to which particular attention must be paid:

- The salaries and the stipends for the persons who work in our communities must conform to civil laws and at the same time to the parameters of justice.
- Missionaries will never concretize any help project without having previously obtained the permission of both civil and Church authorities. Utmost care must be exercised that the local people get involved in such projects; such projects must be the object of discernment by the missionary community before asking for the authorization of the major superior.
- In the concretization of works and any other economic activity, the administrators and the superiors, according to their own level of competence, must faithfully follow the civil and ecclesiastical rules in what concerns taxes, contributions, profit taxes, security norms.
- Since we must practice solidarity with the poor and share our goods with those in need, the superiors and the communities must be careful to answer the calls for aid and the requests of subsidies that might come from ecclesial entities or humanitarian organizations, according to the possibilities of the Province and in harmony with the criteria of our own legislation.
- The superiors and the administrators should avoid incurring debts and obligations with third parties in order to solve the internal financial needs of our Institute. In the case of single missionaries who contracted important debts in an illicit way and without permission, the Directions of the Provinces, in consultation with the General Direction and in respect of civil legislation, will decide whether to involve or not to involve our Institute in paying such debts. If this happens, the modalities and the grade of intervention of our Institute in favor of the confrere must be clearly specified.

Respecting the Intentions of the Donor

In the administration of the goods that Divine Providence gives us through our benefactors, the intention of the donors must be taken into highest consideration. No one has the right to take this intention lightly, avoid it, or disregard it, especially when it is clearly expressed. When a mission project is sustained by the benefactors, but afterwards, for some kind of reason, it cannot be concretized, the consent of the benefactors is necessary before using the money for other purposes. If, for some reason, this consent could not be obtained, the donations received should be returned to the donors: This is the honest policy.

It is our duty to instruct the Benefactors in such a way that they will give their contributions to useful projects that have the required permission and authorization.

The offerings given for the missions without a specific purpose, will be deposited in the common regional or local community purse, and will not be at the disposal of the single missionary.

Caring for Real Estate Goods

Every local community must take good care of our houses and other real estate goods. A plan must be prepared annually, if serious deterioration is to be avoided, a deterioration that would require afterwards expensive work in order to maintain these goods.

The Provinces that have big houses that are used only in part should study opportune solutions to provide the community with smaller and more functional buildings, and thus reduce considerably the expenses of their upkeep.

It is the duty of every Local Administrator to keep an inventory of all real estate and other possessions that belong to our Institute or to the local Church. The updating of these lists should be done annually, new possessions should be included in it, and things that no longer belong to us should be excluded.

C. Economy and Communion

In the past, religious poverty aimed at instilling in the religious the sense of austerity of life, good management and renouncing things that were not necessary. The task of administrators consisted in reducing expenses, to save as much as possible, and making a discreet accumulation of resources so as to arrive at the end of the year in a positive state of business. Today, we are discovering a new dimension of religious poverty which is labeled as sharing, communion of goods, economy of communion, solidarity.

The two aspects must not be separated so that our sharing may not be reduced to the mere “scraps that fall from the table of the rich.” We should share not only what is superfluous, but also what we ordinarily call “opportune”, and in some cases even what is “necessary”. Every missionary should convert to this new vision of “communion”, which requires opening up the heart and the hands to those who are in a greater need. The young, particularly, should be formed not to accumulate for themselves and for their own work and activities, but to be prepared to behave as true brothers towards the other members of our religious family and towards the poor.

Communion at the Local Level

At the local community level, the administration operates on the common purse principle. Every piece of income will be given to the superior, and the administrator will place it in the common purse. The ordinary expenses for the running of the life of the community will usually be made by the administrator. Every missionary will receive from the purse the amount needed for the ordinary expenses of his life and of his work. For other non-ordinary expenses, he needs the consent of the superior of the community. In order to correctly practice the common purse system, the following are necessary: preparing the annual estimated budget, which must be approved by the Regional Direction; paying particular attention to the reading of the balance sheets; making a periodical discernment on the financial situation; having a clear understanding of the role and task of the local administrator; receiving a correct account of all income and of all the expenses from every member of the community. All members of the community must practice sobriety of life and curbing of the expenses, and strive to develop their search for the necessary sources of income.

When the income is not enough to cover all the expenses of the community, the intervention of the Region will be called for. This is done through an appropriate request to the Regional Superior.

Communion of Goods at the Regional Level

The circulation of goods at the level of the Province will work if all the communities are available to share what they do not need. Thus, the regional fund can be established and grow. The Region must decide the ceiling of the financial reserves that each local community can keep: this is done by taking into account each community’s ordinary expenses. The rest is sent periodically to the Region’s purse. Unless the rules of the Province have decided otherwise, another source of income for the Region’s common purse are the donations from benefactors that are given with no definite purpose, and also the annual subsidies from the General Administration.

Every Province, especially during the meetings of the Regional Conference, may come up with other means to develop the Regional Fund. Some regional activities may have the purpose to boost the regional economic self-sufficiency. But we must avoid the pitfall of becoming traffickers, which is against the spirit of poverty, and have trust in human and Divine Providence. Requests for financial help are normally addressed to the Regional Administrator. The latter studies the request together with the local community in question. If he deems it necessary, he asks for the opinion of the Administrative Council and then presents it to the Superior of the Province for approval.

More than the amount of the fund, the cordial and fraternal participation of all the missionaries in establishing and building up the Regional common purse is a meaningful sign of the family spirit that must be a characteristic of every Region.

Communion of Goods at the Level of Our Institute

Our Institute has a general fund that is supervised by the General Administrator. From this fund, the General Administration takes what the General Direction needs, subsidies to the Provinces, and other specific needs of our Institute. This fund is built up with what comes from wills and testaments, bank interests and subsidies from some Regions. It does not grow in funds, because it should not become an improper accumulation of money that contradicts poverty; and it does not diminish, because it must go on being a precautionary measure for our Institute.

At the end of each year, the General Direction allocates to the Provinces the surplus of the preceding financial operation, and deposits in the fund an amount that corresponds to the inflation index. The subsidies to the Provinces aim at helping their common purses and at aiding projects that favor the evangelization of the poor.

For a few years now, the General Administration has developed and put into action a plan to gradually raise the level of funds of the poorest Provinces. In force of the principles of equality and fraternal sharing of goods, the General Administration should mentalize and guide the Regions that have reached the established financial ceiling to distribute their surplus by the poorest Provinces.

Solidarity with Family Members in Difficulty

Faithful to the teachings of the Founder and to family spirit, our Institute will make an effort to be open and sensitive towards situations of real need on the part of members of the families of missionaries, especially in the cases of emergency and serious sickness of parents of missionaries. Every contribution will be given to the community of which the missionary in question is a member, in full dialogue with the Regional Superior and with his authorization.

The families of the missionaries who work in foreign lands should be periodically visited by our confreres and should keep in contact with our Institute. This way, it will be easier to come to know situations of true indigence, and to intervene in an opportune and timely way.

The Province, or the continent, in which a missionary lives should study norms and details that regulate the economic support that a missionary who lives in that Province or continent can give to his family: this should be done following IMC legislation and the norms contained in this letter. We must not let local traditions that are contrary to the vow of poverty to take root, and we must make sure that certain families of missionaries do not come up with excessive demands. To guarantee this, let missionary animators and formators sensitize the families of our students on the new rapport that religious profession and the vow of poverty create in relation to them. Wherever it be deemed necessary, the moment a young man joins our Institute, a written request may be asked from his parents in which they state that they willingly let their son enter our Institute, and that they, the parents, will no longer expect any economic compensation from these their sons. No candidate will be accepted by us whose family needs the help of their son for their own subsistence, for the precept does command, “Honor your father and your mother”.

Sharing Our Goods with the Poor

“The mission is not possible if it isn’t “for” and “with” the poor.” Poverty in consecrated life determines the premises of consecrated life through a sobriety and style of life that favor solidarity, sharing and nearness to people” (XGC, 30). Faithful to the capitular directives and to the centenary traditions of our Institute, each missionary and the Provinces will develop an openness and sensibility to sharing their goods with the poor. This they can concretize in diverse ways. We cannot forget that the goods placed by Divine Providence in our hands are for the needs of the missionaries, for the poor and for evangelization. Sharing what we have is one of the most “missionary” ways of living religious poverty, and that is what people preferentially expect from us.

Let each missionary and the Provinces try to respond positively, as much as they can, to the requests that our Institute sends through the General Direction to aid situations of special need, such as natural catastrophes, wars... We should also get our Christian communities involved in these matters.

Not forgetting the service our houses must render to the missionaries and the necessary privacy that they must safeguard, our houses should welcome the poor. This is an excellent sign of sharing and brotherhood.

Missionaries must shun the subtle temptation of presenting themselves as “the benefactors” of the poor by offering to them works and things that satisfy more the donor than the receiver. In every realization, let the missionary always look for the collaboration of the people and of local organizations, so that his role may not appear as predominant.

We underline the importance of the custom that exists in some Provinces, which was also used during the centennial celebrations of our Institute, of distributing every year part of our surplus to the poor. It will be a sign and a memory of the engagement of our Institute and of each one of us, which stems from our missionary vocation.

Aid to those who Leave our Institute

Through the General and Regional Directions, and in the name of evangelical charity, our Institute will be solidary with the perpetually professed members who permanently leave our Congregation, independently from the ways and motives that led them to make such a decision. Each case will be

studied separately. We shall consider their age, capacity of work, their diplomas. Exempt from these are the priests who become incardinated in dioceses.

D. Administration of Goods

The Administrators

In the area of the economy of our Institute, the General Administrator and the Regional Administrator have a role of extreme importance. Basing ourselves on past experience and on the present availability of personnel of our Institute, we delineate here the characteristic traits of the administrator, not so much to idealize its figure as to underline the characteristics that each missionary who is called to this service should strive to acquire.

1. The administrator is a Consolata missionary who identifies fully with our Institute and its mission, one who knows the characteristics and the spirit of our Institute and tries to abide by them. The technical know-how and capacity that he needs in order to serve in the administrative field must be integrated into his vocational identity; even more, they must highlight the latter.
2. He is a person who must be able to work with others. The demands in the economic area today become more and more numerous, and no single person can claim to be able to hold such an office all by himself. He must be conscious of his own limitations and allow experts to help and advise him. Besides, he must be constantly in dialogue with the Council of the Province or the General Council in whose name he operates.
3. He must develop an interest in social questions and in solidarity with the poor. He will beware of the excesses of neoliberal capitalism and of the laws of unscrupulous marketing. He knows the social doctrine of the Church and updates himself constantly through appropriate studies.
4. He must always cultivate the attitude of the student because he knows that things continually change in this field, especially in the area of the laws that regulate the patrimony and the workers. Social justice, too, raises many questions that touch the administration of the goods of our Institute.
5. He must be able to conjugate a necessary realism in the management of money with the values that are proper to religious life and the Gospel. In fact, nothing is more concrete than money, and there is nothing that can be more affected by currents of thought or ideologies than economy. The administrator must be able to manage the economy of the Institute on the parameters of social justice, religious poverty and the demands of the mission.
6. He must be able to use discretion and prudence in divulging information relative to the confreres. At the same time, he should be prodigal in sharing, at the interior of the community or Region, the information that helps the community to grow in the sense of co-responsibility, the information that strengthens family ties.
7. The tasks of the administrator are different from those of the superior. The administrator does the things that belong to ordinary administration, the superior and his council authorizes the administrator to do what belongs to extraordinary acts of administration.

Most of what has been said here about the General and Regional Administrator may be said also of Local Administrators. Before beginning working in their job, Regional Administrators will spend an appropriate amount of time with the General Administrator to familiarize themselves with the new technical aspects of administration and with the praxis of our Institute. As much as possible, in a local community the role of superior and administrator should not be held by the same person at the same time. At the regional level, there should be periodical meetings among local administrators to help them perfect their accounting and administrative skills and update themselves on the various aspects of their office.

The Principles that Guide Us

A correct administration of goods cannot be only the fruit of the good will of the one who is called to hold the office of administrator. A sufficient amount of knowledge of the rules that must guide administration must be placed at the disposal of all missionaries, since, to some extent, they are all called to administer. In this area, the subsidies prepared by the General Administrator should be used⁷, as well as other documents available in the Provinces.

⁷ Cfr. *La Contabilità nell'Istituto Missioni Consolata*, Rome, 1993.

Our documents have often expressed the desire that our professed students learn the fundamental notions of our system of accounting and become familiar with the principles that regulate the use and the management of the goods of our Institute. This must now become effective. Let the Regional Administrator provide every year to our students an appropriate course on this matter, after agreement with the people in charge of our formative communities. In this course, the technical notions should be taught, but let the spirit that guides the use of goods in our Institute be largely explained. The students should also be widely informed on the financial situation of the Province, its problems and difficulties included.

The General Administrator is to begin the revision of the *Directory for the Administration of Goods*, so that it may always better respond to the administrative needs of our times and the new realities of our Institute. A copy of it should be given to every missionary, and explained to each and all.

Some Rules of Good Administration

1. Every true administration begins with an analysis of the balance sheets of the previous year and of the formulation of the estimated budget. Let's not forget that, in order to save money, we can never try to avoid taxes, salaries, social justice...
2. Whoever administers funds or other goods must give an account to the one in charge: The Local Administrator to the Local Superior, the Regional Administrator to the Regional Superior, the General Administrator to the General Superior. Also, the work of each subordinate administration must be submitted for examination and approval to the next administration in the upward-scale. It is also necessary that the competent superior, personally or through others (accounting examiners), make sure that everything is in order, and that each administrative activity was done in a correct way.
3. Every time there is an absolutely necessary extraordinary expense without having the needed funds, and a debt must be incurred, it is necessary to obtain the explicit permission of the competent major superior. While discerning, the following criteria must be followed: The expense must truly be necessary and unpostponable; we must be certain that we will be able to pay back the whole debt; we must not simply trust the word of Benefactors who tell us that they will give the needed sum of money, or the promise that they will get a financial contribution from a public or private entity. One way or another, we suggest that the money be obtained from the regional or general fund rather than from banks.
4. In the case of alienation, acquisition or restructuration of a pretty good amount of real estate, the permission must be obtained from the General Direction. The opinion of experts must also be obtained and the interested community must make a serious discernment. We must also consider the future economic consequences of the act or of the expense that is about to be incurred.
5. Every good administrator thinks not only about the present, about balancing the monthly or annual budget or account, he must also consider the future. At the end of the month or of the year, any surplus must not be spent just like that, but go into the growth of the common goods fund. Acquitting himself of the daily and current affairs should not prevent the good administrator from taking a wider look at the all important businesses that weigh on the community or on the Region.

Self-Sufficiency

Self-sufficiency at the level of the local or regional communities is the objective that must be sought by everybody, even if the many missionary situations do not allow it to be arrived at in an easy way. In many countries, aid from the State is minimal, insignificant even, no social welfare exists, and the aid given to health and school activities is nominal. In many dioceses, the missionaries do not receive any subsidy from the local Church, and the contribution from the Christian communities is very low. Obviously, the Provinces that operate in such circumstances consider self-sufficiency an aim of still-far-away achievement.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, our engagement and good will to render the local communities self-sufficient should never be absent. We give here some suggestions on how to gradually reach such autonomy.

1. As much as possible, ordinary expenses should be covered by local contributions. In the case of extraordinary expenses (buildings, means of transportation, formation houses), outside help may be sought.

2. Whenever possible, local products should be used. No goods should be imported from other countries if they can be found locally.
3. The style of life should be simplified and rendered compatible with the means at our disposal.
4. Before the novitiate, students should contribute, financially too, to their maintenance. Missionaries should try to find scholarships for our students in formation.
5. Let the Provinces, in communion with the General Administration, constitute the Regional Fund, whose interest will aid their self-sufficiency. This fund should not be used for the needs of the Region, only its interests should be used. Although the capital belongs to the Region, its purpose cannot be changed without the permission of the General Council.
6. Let the Provinces study the possibility of realizing projects that will generate income. Thus, dependence from foreign entities will be reduced. However, such projects should be compatible with our missionary work and the style of life of a religious community.
7. Some indispensable steps necessary to reach economic self-sufficiency are: Careful planning of the available resources, adequate preparation of the personnel working in economic services, transparency and information, periodical controlling of economic activities.

Administrative Transparency and Community Information:

These two are elements of fundamental importance in a correct administrative management. They will find their concretization in the following:

- trying to get all the collaboration possible when budgets and projects of a certain importance are elaborated;
- undergoing periodical controls that are accurate and serious, and are prepared by competent persons;
- giving out detailed and exhaustive reports, at the local and regional level, during IMC meetings;
- organizing meetings and courses of economic nature, not only for the administrators but also for the superiors since the latter have responsibility over their respective administrations.

IV. AN ONGOING REFLECTION...

As we have already said at the beginning this document is meant to kick off a continued reflection on the subject by every missionary and by every local community, and by every regional and provincial community. We do hope that it will be a propitious occasion that will touch off in our Institute a candid and sincere dialogue on the matters that are connected with religious poverty. This document is a necessary path to tread, and a necessary condition to reach the objective proposed to us by the XGC. The result of the reflection of each Province, if communicated to the General Direction, could afterwards be shared with the whole Institute, and it would become an ever growing power towards an ever greater inculturation of this value in the diverse contexts in which our Institute operates.

Among us, everyone knows that the theme of poverty, economy and the use of material goods for the mission is a theme that can produce, whenever it is put into practice, a lot of difficulties and misunderstandings among missionaries, especially if they come from different cultural stock. Inculturation is a powerful richness, but it must be conquered, understood, matured by all of us in a slow and gradual process. We must always remind ourselves that no culture can be considered as a defense wall in front of the demands of the radical defenses that our choice of life proposes to us. We know that every culture is called to confront itself, in the daily toil of communication with the confreres, with the fundamental nucleus that is point of reference for all, which is the Gospel and our missionary charism. Only in perfect openness and availability can we extract from the principles exposed in this document the operative choices and the attitudes that must characterize us. They must all be understood in the same mode and with the same strength, but with a sense of personal conviction.

The General Direction wants to organize, towards the end of 2003, a general meeting for Regional Administrators, in order to find the operative options that are most appropriate to the concretization of the directives that were exposed in this document. In this meeting, the members of the General Direction and the members of the General Council of Administration will be present.

We thank the Superiors of the Provinces for their precious contribution to the redaction of this letter. We want to ask them to prepare, in collaboration with all their regional offices, a program that will

deepen this theme at the various levels of their own Province. The impact that this document will have on our religious family will much depend on this capillary work that they will be able to accomplish.

V. CONCLUSION

Our Institute has just concluded its centennial celebrations: one hundred years at the service of God and of the mission. With grateful joyous heart, we have sent our thanks to the Lord. We have also expressed our fervent decision to continue, with renewed interest, the journey that is ahead of us. While we look ahead towards the second century of life of our Institute, let us allow the prophetic words of our Founder echo in the heart of each one of us: “It’s true, you know, that the whole future of our community depends on the observance of the vow of poverty; when its observance becomes slack, the whole spirit evaporates... I am sure that if our Institute will obey these rules, it will always progress. Woe and alas if the time will come when these regulations will no longer be observed.” (Conf III, 9-10). He used to add: “As long as the community stays in the spirit of poverty, it will do a lot of good. Woe and alas, if it fails! When one begins faltering (in this area), everything goes!” (Conf II, 469).

May our Mother Consolata and St. Joseph, who is traditionally venerated in our Institute as the protector of the administrators, bless us and guide us always!

With best wishes and fraternal greetings,

Fr. Piero Trabucco, IMC,
(*Father General*)

Fr. Anthony Bellagamba, IMC

Fr. Norberto Ribeiro Louro, IMC

Fr. Aquiléo Fiorentini, IMC

Fr. Jean André Benedetti, IMC

ISTITUTO MISSIONI CONSOLATA

Viale delle Mura Aurelie, 11-13 – 00165 Roma

LA DIREZIONE GENERALE

November 15, 2002

My dearest Consolata Lay Missionaries,

“You go too. The call is a concern not only of Pastors, clergy, and men and women religious. The call is addressed to everyone: lay people as well are personally called by the Lord, from whom they receive a mission on behalf of the Church and the world.” (*Christifideles laici*, 2).

The Missions need you. The Call/Invitation to the Missions is the vocation of every baptized person in every Christian community. “The lay faithful, precisely because they are members of the Church, have the vocation and mission of proclaiming the Gospel: they are prepared for this work by the sacraments of Christian initiation and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit” (*CL* 33). Your Baptism gives you the “right and the duty” to commit yourselves “to making the proclamation of salvation known and accepted by all people throughout the world” (*Redemptoris Missio*, 71).

In spite of a long tradition of working with lay people that dates from the very beginning of our Institute we recognize that recent developments in the lay missionary movement and your own insistence constitute a sign of the times to which we must pay heed. Otherwise – as the XCG tells us – “we would neglect a genuine service to the missions and deprive the missions of potentially precious assistance” (*XCG*, 60). The Institute recognizes and joyfully accepts your lay missionary vocation; it is certain that your presence will “raise the value of witness, strengthen our ability to work together and to live out the mission in communion and complementarity” (*XCG*, 60).

Our common commitment to the *missio ad gentes* constitutes a first and fundamental bond between the Institute and you. This bond is strengthened by your desire to share directly in the charism, spirituality and heritage bequeathed to us by Blessed Joseph Allamano.

We see in this desire another gift of the Spirit which helps unfold the riches of our charism in complementary life-styles and in an understanding of the Church as communion.

In recent years reflection and discussion of these realities have become more intense. We have sought out better ways and methods to live our mission with the same spirit.

We believe the time has finally come for the Institute and the Consolata Lay Missionaries (CLM) to adopt concrete guidelines to launch our common mission apostolate and our sharing in the charism and spirituality of Blessed Allamano.

The General Secretariat of the Missions has carefully supervised the various editorial stages through which this document has passed. It is by no means a set of bylaws or statutes in the juridical sense of the world, but rather an outline, a point of departure. It contains:

- elements that have emerged in our recent discussions that are to be preserved and promoted; we think these elements are indispensable if we are to speak of “Consolata” lay missionaries.
- guidelines and suggestions offered purely as examples to assist you in the determining responsibly your own organization and mission commitment in the context of the real-world situation and the social-cultural environment in which you live.

On this basis we assure you of the Institute’s commitment to welcoming you, guiding you, helping you grow, supporting you in every way possible, working together so that the good seed you represent will grow into a fruitful harvest for the sake of the missions and of the world.

We are well aware that we still have a long way to go. And we would like to travel this road together – IMC and CLM. This document expresses the feelings of the IMC on the principles that will govern its relations with the CLM. Since we are convinced that these principles are to a large extent shared by you as well, we would ask that this document be considered a starting point for the journey we are making together.

We call upon you, Consolata Lay Missionaries to give greater definition to your organization on a national level; to assume – even officially – commitment for CLM; to establish the first CLM local communities; to set up some form – even embryonic – of national organization. We would propose a date by which to accomplish these tasks: June 20, 2003, the Feast of Our Lady the Consolata.

A CLM gathering with IMC delegates for the specific purpose of studying (correct discrepancies, enrich the text) the document we are proposing should be convened at some date we both agree upon. This could be the occasion for officially inaugurating the Consolata Lay Missionaries.

This present document will remain in force *ad experimentum* until 2005. At that time the IMC General Chapter can undertake a complete evaluation of the project. Genuine experience will show us what changes or adaptations need be made. May the Lord bless the efforts and good will of everyone involved.

We entrust the path of sharing and communion that is opening up before us to the trusted guidance of the Spirit, the prime mover in the missions, to the maternal protection of Our dear Lady, the Consolata, and to the care of one we all consider our father – Blessed Joseph Allamano.

Father Piero Trabucco, IMC
(*Father General*)
Father Antonio Bellagamba, IMC
Father Norberto Ribeiro Louro, IMC
Father Aquiléo Fiorentini, IMC
Father Jean André Benedetti, IMC

CONSOLATA LAY MISSIONARIES

IDENTITY AND PURPOSE

1. The “Consolata Lay Missionary” [CLM] is someone who seeks to respond to Christ’s call within the context of his own lay vocation and makes the *missio ad gentes* in the spirit and charism Blessed Joseph Allamano received from God his life-choice. He shares the missionary goal of the Consolata Mission Institute founded by Blessed Allamano.
2. The CLM vocation has its own nature and is complementary to the other vocations in the Church. It embraces the whole period of a person’s life and is not limited to a specific period. It must be the object of attentive discernment. It involves direct commitment to the Church’s work of evangelization. It involves a style of life and witness that corresponds to this commitment.
3. Sharing the common missionary goal, the charism and spirituality of Blessed Allamano are the ties that bind the CLM to the Consolata Mission Institute [IMC] in a deep sense of mutual affection and cooperation and that creates a spirit of family and communion beneficial to both. Because of these bonds of charism and spirituality, the CLM have a privileged relationship of communion and collaboration with the IMC.
4. The goal which distinguishes the CML in the Church is the evangelization of people through sharing in the charism of Blessed Allamano. This goal is achieved in communion with the Institute Allamano founded and in ways approved by the Church.
5. To achieve this goal with responsibility, proper autonomy and freedom of organization, the CLM constitute an “Association”⁸ This association forms, preserves and deepens the life-choice of its members and constitutes a bond of union; it guides, coordinates and gives life to their missionary commitment in a commonality of purpose and family spirit.
6. The Association guarantees each CLM the possibility of fulfilling his missionary vocation with an explicit “missionary mandate.” The mandate involves the total, direct, temporary dedication of the CLM to a concrete missionary project either at home or abroad or a permanent, responsible commitment in the mission work of the local community to which the CLM belongs. The Association is autonomous in its supervision of every organizational and operational aspect of the CLM’s missionary commitment.
7. To facilitate the achievement of its missionary tasks, the Association should seek official recognition of its legal status - at least from civil authorities – as soon as possible. The Association is conceived of as an international organization composed of national branches.
8. CLM everywhere will be guided by the principles laid out in this document. National branches will determine regulations adapted to the conditions of life and work prevalent in their own area.

BONDS BETWEEN CLM AND IMC

9. The ecclesiology of communion requires respect for the diversity of vocations that exists in the Church and acceptance of the riches this complementarity provides. The vocation of a religious Consolata Missionary and a lay Consolata Missionary are both different and complementary. The bonds which exist between CLM and IMC are not constituted by the fact that CLM belong juridically to the Institute.

⁸ Instead of “Association” any term can be used that expresses the idea of “a group of persons united by the same ideal with common interests and goals.”

10. The CLM and the Consolata Mission Institute are, however, linked by authentic bonds constituted by the fact that they share genuinely and deeply in the spirituality and charism of Blessed Allamano and in a common commitment to the *missio ad gentes*. These bonds are deep; they are rooted in mutual affection and cooperation, mutual help and effort to achieve a complementarity of vocations. Both are called to grow and strengthen each other in a genuine family spirit and in a communion that benefits each. Like IMC Missionaries, CLM consider the Superior General of the Institute their ultimate point of reference, the guarantor of communion and fidelity to Blessed Allamano's original vision.
11. To guarantee concretely the bonds between the IMC and the CLM, the Institute is appointing certain Consolata Missionaries with the following tasks:
 - to guide the CLM in their efforts to make their own, understand and carry out as laymen the charism and spirituality of Blessed Allamano;
 - to foster continual reflection on the *missio ad gentes* and its requirements;
 - to collaborate in the formation of new candidates for the Consolata Lay Missionaries;
 - to promote among CLM collaboration in concrete IMC missionary endeavors.
12. To strengthen bonds with the IMC, the CML must:
 - accept, understand and live the charism of Blessed Joseph Allamano and his spirituality;
 - assume the spiritual and missionary attitudes that befit those who bear the name Consolata;
 - strive to achieve as individuals and communities our common missionary goals;
 - collaborate in missionary work in ways to be determined on a case by case basis in agreement with the IMC.
13. The bonds between the IMC and the CML are built up on a day by day basis, with human relationships of friendship, mutual assistance and edification, shared times of prayer and community life, continuous, sincere dialogue and deep mutual respect.
14. There are certain times during the year when it is especially appropriate to express our bonds of charism and mission: the shared celebration of the feasts of Blessed Joseph Allamano (February 16) and Our Lady the Consolata (June 20).

CLM ORGANIZATION

[The following section contains a series of suggestions. It is up to the CLM themselves to define their structure and organization]

15. The Consolata Lay Missionaries have their own autonomous, organizational structure and direction.

General Level

16. The General Assembly is the supreme CLM authority. It comprises CLM national coordinators and the IMC delegate. It is responsible for:
 - analyzing CLM's status based on the reports presented by the national coordinators;
 - discussing and making decisions on items, directives and proposals relevant to the life and mission of the CLM;
 - examining the Association's financial situation and approving its six-year budget;
 - electing of the CLM General Coordinating Board.
17. The CLM General Coordinating Board comprises members designated and elected by the General Assembly and an IMC Delegate appointed by the Superior General. It will meet as often as its work requires.
18. The General Coordinating Board is responsible for:

- governing the association on a general level and representing the CLM juridically;
 - coordinating and maintaining contact with CLM National Coordinating Boards for all that concerns the life of the Association and the progress of mission projects;
 - promoting study and discussion on items and situations relevant to the life and mission of the CLM on an international level;
 - administering the CLM general funds;
 - convoking the CLM General Assembly and preparing its agenda.
19. The IMC General Delegate to the CLM is responsible for:
- establishing a liaison between the CLM and the IMC on the General Council level;
 - facilitating the implementation of CLM projects – especially those done in collaboration with the IMC on the level of concrete mission projects;
 - assisting the CLM on a general level – especially with regard to sharing charism, spirituality and missionary goals.

National Level

20. On the national level, the National Assembly is the highest CLM authority. All members of the Association have the right to take part in the Assembly. The CLM National Coordinating Board will convoke the General Assembly at intervals to be determined by the Assembly itself. The National Assembly is responsible for:
- electing the National Coordinating Board and other eventual members of the board;
 - discussing items and problems relevant to the CLM's life and mission;
 - examining the National Coordinating Board's work;
 - examining the financial situation and approving the budget.
21. The National Coordinating Board is the supervisory organ of the CLM on the national level. It comprises members designated and elected by the Assembly and an IMC Delegate appointed by the Regional Superior with tasks analogous to the IMC General Delegate. The board will meet as its work requires.
22. The National Coordinating Board is responsible for:
- coordinating and ensuring relations between different local CLM communities and maintaining contact with the General Coordinating Board;
 - representing juridically and governing the CLM in a given nation;
 - supervising, guiding and coordinating CLM local community mission projects;
 - administering CLM funds;
 - convoking the National Assembly.

Local Level

23. The basic structure of the CLM on the local level is the “local CLM community.” Local CLM communities can assume different forms and be differently organized in line with National Regulations as personal and local situations require. The local community is the CLM's fundamental frame of reference. In it one lives one's own faith and commitment to the *missio ad gentes*; in it one learns, shares and lives with others the charism and spirituality of Blessed Allamano in fraternity and a spirit of family.
24. The local CLM community is guided by a coordinator elected by the members of the community and assisted by an IMC missionary appointed by the Regional Superior with responsibilities analogous to the IMC National Delegate.
25. Within the framework of the local CLM community members will agree on assigning the following responsibilities:

- drawing up and implementing a life plan (*projet de vie*) for the local CLM community which includes the community's explicit missionary commitment;
- ensuring guidance and spiritual direction;
- guiding discernment: a) for those who would like to make a commitment as a member of the CLM; b) for CLM members who want to be sent to the missions;
- maintaining contact with the CLM National Coordinating Board.

CLM Physical Structures

26. Normally the CLM uses rooms in IMC centers and houses for their meetings and local community activity. The CLM and the IMC will agree on space to be provided for these purposes. This fosters a sharing of life with the missionaries as well as a profound sharing of charism and spirituality. In the event that the CLM thinks it appropriate to use its own independent premises, the National Coordinating Board will study the matter and make the appropriate decisions.

Admission of Members

27. The requirements and method for accepting new members are:
- a personal vocation to live the *missio ad gentes* in conformity with the charism of Blessed Joseph Allamano;
 - a previous period of formation – this can vary in nature and length according to place and circumstance; it should however lead one to human, Christian and missionary growth and direct one towards a vocation choice for the missions;
 - with the guidance of another CLM member or an IMC missionary, the individual requesting admission should engage in an appropriate period of discernment;
 - the request for admission must be accepted by the local CML coordinating board.
28. Before making any formal commitment, it is especially important that each CLM candidate take part in formation process whose length and content is determined by the CLM National Coordinating Board. The coordinator of the local CLM community and the local IMC Delegate are responsible for guiding this formation process and determining a candidate's fitness before he is admitted to the Association. They must take into consideration the personal circumstances of every individual candidate.
29. An individual officially entering the Association must make an explicit, personal commitment in the form determined by each CLM National Coordinating Board.

Separation of an Individual Member from the Association

30. After an individual member who has prayed and sought the advice of a prudent person, decides that he ought no longer remain in the Association he should inform the local coordinator in writing and seek approval for his decision to leave. From that moment he is free of all the obligations he/she had assumed and no longer enjoys the accompanying rights.
31. If after mature reflection and for serious reasons the local CLM coordinating board decides that an individual ought no longer remain in the Association the local coordinator should inform that individual in writing of the decision to dissolve his/her ties to the association; the individual loses all the rights of the Association and is free of any obligations he assumed.

CLM LIFE PLAN (*PROJET DE VIE*)

32. Each local CLM community should organize itself and establish a time-table of regular meetings for permanent formation, fraternity and prayer; it should program its concrete missionary commitments

according to a life plan (*projet de vie*) that it draws up annually. Those dimensions of CLM life that must be included in its life plan (*projet de vie*) are the following:

Permanent Formation

33. CLM members at various levels of the organization should prepare and implement a concrete process of permanent formation that includes adequate content, along with the means and methods to study all aspects of their vocation. Primary responsibility for permanent formation rests with the CLM members themselves. This formation should represent a vital synthesis of academic content, life experience and concrete commitment.
34. Permanent formation in CLM local communities should aim at:
 - promoting the personal growth of each individual;
 - reinvigorating adherence to the charism and spirituality of Blessed Joseph Allamano;
 - fostering growth in one's *missio ad gentes* identity and in the ability to implement this identity in the concrete style of one's life.

Spirituality

35. Consolata Lay Missionaries are nourished by a spirituality that reflects the life they have chosen. In conformity with their *missio ad gentes* goals and the spiritual teachings of Blessed Allamano, local communities are responsible for:
 - living the values of the Kingdom;
 - recognizing the primacy of God in their own life and the quest for holiness;
 - making the Bible their own book;
 - accepting the presence of Mary as model, guide, inspiration and mother.
36. Over and above the personal spiritual commitment of each CLM member, the local community should adopt appropriate means for supporting, nourishing and making its own spiritual life grow. These could be: regularly scheduled community prayer, community celebration of the Eucharist, days of recollection, retreats, community *Lectio Divina*, studying, discussing and sharing our missionary spirituality.

Community Life

37. Fraternity and communion in the life of every local CLM community guarantee the effective proclamation of the Gospel and an authentic missionary commitment.
38. According to Blessed Allamano's teaching we are a "family." Each of us is accepted as a brother; each of us is interested in the other; we live the mission in a commonality of purpose; we eschew all forms of individualism and selfishness; we share each other's joys, sufferings and hopes. This is the "soul and life" of the CLM. Each local CLM community will determine its own form of community life and the best way to implement it. We must foster greater sharing and communion between the local CLM and IMC communities.

CLM MISSIONARY COMMITMENT

39. The essential and constituent element of a CLM vocation is commitment to the *missio ad gentes*. The "Missionary Program" of a local community is especially important: it makes the missionary mandate entrusted to each member concrete.
40. The Missionary Program includes all the dimensions of a local CLM community's missionary commitment: from total and temporary commitment to some concrete mission project at home or

abroad to the permanent mission commitment of all its members. The Missionary Program of each local community must:

- provide the framework for a community's discernment to ensure correspondence with its mission commitment;
 - be approved, supported and coordinated by the CLM National Coordinating Board;
 - be articulated in one or more "concrete missionary activities;"
 - be implemented at home or abroad;
 - be either autonomous or a collaborative effort with the IMC or some other entity.
41. Each local CLM community should appoint one of its members as "responsible for the program;" he/she will oversee its implementation by:
- defining the missionary activity or work in terms of : goals, duration and CLM personnel involved. In developing a projects close attention should be paid to their practicality and sustainability lest it be necessary to abandon them before completion;
 - determining the expense involved in a project;
 - inspecting and evaluating projects annually; managing the personnel and cost of a project.
42. It is preferable that projects of a certain size be discussed, taken on and implemented by several local CLM communities – especially if they are neighbors. In this case responsibility for implementation rests with a group made up of representatives of each community; all the communities involved should review the project jointly.
43. The CLM should work towards eventual economic independence. This implies that each local community is expected to support its own missionary activity through contributions from members, fund-raising and the search for public and private grants. The IMC will guide, support and help the CLM achieve this financial independence.
44. With the support of its local communities each CLM National Coordinating Board will make n effort to find the means and methods consonant with the financial situation of its lay missionaries to establish a National Lay Fund. This will help to defray the unforeseen expenses of local community missionary activities in a nation. The fund will be managed directly by the National Coordinating Board.
45. 45. When the missionary activity of a local CLM community is a collaborative effort with other organizations (IMC, dioceses, ecclesiastical or civil institutions) expenses should be equitably distributed. The terms for sharing expenses should be the subject of an agreement to which all involved in the project are party. Expenses should be apportioned on the basis of degree of involvement and responsibility.
46. 46. Over time the responsibility for a concrete mission project may pass from one local community to another – this is especially true with long-term projects. When this happens there should be an agreement between the communities involved that is approved by the National Coordinating Board. In the event that the local communities belong to different nations the approval of both the National Coordinating Boards and the General Coordinating Board as well are required.
47. 47. Entities sustaining the expense of a particular mission activity should periodically review both the progress of the project and the equitable distribution of expenses.

CLM Missionary Projects in collaboration with the IMC

48. When the mission activity of a local CLM community involves direct and temporary collaboration with the IMC either at home or abroad, it must go through the following stages:

- a proposal of temporary and direct collaboration on the part of the CLM in an IMC concrete mission activity; and/or a request for such collaboration from the IMC to the CLM National Coordinating Board
 - a period of discernment regarding the CLM members to be directly involved in this collaboration
 - adequate formation and immediate preparation for the CLM
 - a formal contract (“collaboration agreement”) that specifies all the details involved (Cf. no. 52).
 - sending the CLM to the project in question
 - oversight of the CLM and the activity to which they are committed
 - welcome the CLM back into their local CLM community on their return.
49. The various stages of CLM/IMC collaboration listed in the previous paragraph should be overseen by the CLM National Coordinator and the IMC Regional Superiors involved in the project, with the assistance of the CLM National Coordinating Board.
50. Discernment of CLM individuals to be committed to a concrete mission activity is the province of those involved together with the local Coordinating Board assisted by the National Coordinating Board. Each national branch of the CLM will establish criteria (preparation, age, individual maturity) to be followed in this discernment.
51. Preparation for departure of the CLM will take place in two stages:
- the first stage should last at least a year and should be dedicated to preparing the CLM to fit into the specific missionary activity
 - the second stage should not last longer than six months and is dedicated to immediate preparations for departure.
52. The “collaboration agreement” should be done in writing; it should be accepted and signed by the CLM members destined for the project, the CLM National Coordinator and the IMC Regional Superiors involved. It should cover the following details:
- the duration of the commitment
 - the concrete terms of the collaboration
 - assistance and guidance for the CLM involved
 - apportionment of financial obligations
 - assistance to CLM when their commitment terminates
 - anything else that will contribute to the success of the project.
53. Sending the CLM to the missions is an ecclesial event and should be celebrated with the required emphasis and solemnity. The local Church should be involved.
54. Assistance to the CLM for the duration of their agreed collaboration will be managed by the CLM National Coordinating Board from which they came; this will be done in collaboration with the IMC Regional Superiors involved in accordance with the provisions of the contract.
55. The return to one’s homeland is the time to recount the works of God and the marvels worked by the Spirit among the peoples. On his/her return, the Consolata Lay Missionary (along with his local community and the CLM National Coordinating Board):
- will review his missionary experience;
 - be given financial and moral assistance to facilitate his return (this will be done in accordance with the National Financial Regulations);
 - will offer direct assistance to mission promotion;
 - once back in local community he/she will embrace its life and mission commitments and will collaborate especially in mission promotion and the formation of other CLM.

Qui nos
praecesserunt

Father
LUKAS SAAMBAYA
1959-2002

Father Saambaya was the son of Nemes Kiwoi and Praxedis Masaambaya. He was born at Kwingaci into an devout Catholic family of the parish of Usseri in the diocese of Moshi in Tanzania on July 9, 1959.

After attending elementary school in his native village he entered the Capuchin minor seminary in Maua (Moshi) where he completed secondary school. In 1981 he took part in the Vocation Orientation the Consolata missionaries organized at Iringa. Lukas was a serious, open and composed young man. He wanted to be a missionary and the name “Consolata” attracted him – in August of that same year he was admitted to the seminary at Langata in Nairobi. He completed his year of novitiate at Sagana (1984-1985) and made his first profession on August 6, 1985.

He was sent to the seminary in Bogota (Colombia) to pursue his theological studies. While still a student he was involved in the missionary apostolate in St. Athanasius parish; he worked especially with the poor and made an effort to derive all possible benefit from his extraordinary mission experiences in Caquetá and Pasacaballos. On July 17, 1988 he consecrated himself to God with perpetual profession.

His writings reveal his ardent desire to be a faithful disciple of the Lord. He wanted to understand and accept God’s plan for his life. He strove to act with Gospel criteria and attitudes: humility, simplicity, dialogue, accepting others, seeking out the poor and dedicating himself to their service.

At the end of his theological studies he returned to Tanzania and was ordained to the priesthood in his home parish at Usseri on December 17, 1989. Afterwards he was sent to Roma-Bravetta and became a student at the Marianum Pontifical Faculty where he earned a licentiate in Mariology.

He was assigned to the Kenya Mission and from 1993 to 1996 worked as assistant pastor at the newly established parish in Chiga (Kisumu). This assignment presented a genuine challenge to Father Lukas; he was obliged to learn a new language and new customs.

In 1996 he was sent to Gatunga in the diocese of Meru and had difficulty learning yet another new language: Kimeru. Two years later he was assigned to Mujwa where he became part of a pastoral team and worked with young people in school. Among other accomplishments he made an important contribution to organizing the 90th anniversary of the mission and the centenary of the Institute.

Final Painful Days

At 3:00 PM on April 2, 2002, Father Lukas was traveling to the mission in Charia along with his two nephews when he was involved in an automobile accident. He was attempting to overtake the car in front of him and collided head-on with a car coming in the opposite direction. One of his nephews was killed instantly; the other sustained light injuries. Father Lukas suffered multiple fractures and fell into a deep coma. He was taken to the hospital in Meru but then because of the seriousness of his condition he was transferred to the hospital in Nairobi.

He underwent a series of operations to repair the multiple fractures. His condition seemed at times to improve but in reality Father Lukas never really awoke from his coma; hope gave way to sadness and on June 23 he suffered cardiac arrest and went to Our Father’s House.

His funeral was celebrated at Mujwa on July 4. His long stay in the hospital had drawn the attention and sympathy of so many confrères, sisters and friends who had known him in his pastoral work. His funeral turned into a mass demonstration of grief.

Msgr. Salesius Mugambi, the coadjutor bishop of Meru presided at the Funeral Mass. Many of his confrères attended the service – among whom was Father Giuseppe Inverardi, the Regional Superior of Tanzania. Some twenty family members came from his native village. There were numerous diocesan

priests and sisters from many different congregations. The large Mujwa church was entirely filled and an equally large crowd followed the service from outside.

The memories of the many people who knew and respected Father Lukas for his work and treasured his friendship contributed to the emotional farewell. His body was carried to the “historical” cemetery in Mujwa where so many of our pioneer fathers and sisters lie buried. Here again the large crowd gave evidence of its affection and esteem as they lined up to throw dirt into his grave.

All of us together gave Father Lukas a special “mandate.” Along with all our missionaries in heaven he must continue to be part of our family and pray for our missions.

Father Luigi Brambilla

TESTIMONIAL

A great friend and brother

I met Father Lukas for the first time at Tosamaganga in May 1981 at a brief course of vocation orientation directed by Father A. Placucci. It was at that time that we were given the name “*placuccini*.” Through that course we came to know the Institute and its mission in the world. I remember that Lukas was very serious about participation and distinguished himself by commitment to prayer, discernment and manual labor.

He came from the Capuchin minor seminary in Maua-Moshi where he had gone to high school. Once he came to know Our Lady, the Consolata, he was determined to enter the Institute. He liked the name “Consolata” and spoke particularly about his attraction to Our Lady.

At the end of the course Lukas was admitted to the philosophy seminary in Nairobi while I had to do my military service in Mafinga. In the letters he wrote me at that time he urged me to complete my military service as soon as possible and come and join him in the seminary. This happened in February 1982. Once I arrived Lukas helped me fit into the new world of the seminary.

He played a very positive role in the formation community. Everything he did, he did with conviction; this created a serious and serene atmosphere in the community. We had good soccer and volleyball teams and Lukas put all his energy and enthusiasm into our matches. He was a good goalie and determined to see our team acquit itself with honor.

Later we were both sent to Colombia: a genuine challenge for us – the first Africans sent to study in Latin America. Lukas joked “we spent twenty-five hours traveling from Nairobi to Bogotá – this is the kind of travel we will engage in as missionaries.” Maybe he wasn’t really joking – he said this with tears in his eyes.

Sister Mary Beth gave evidence of his generosity and commitment to service in a letter she sent me. “I well remember Lukas’ work in the committee for the poor and sick of Yomosa (Bogotá, Colombia). He was an enormous help. He took an interest in the sick and in their relatives. He was a good missionary and disciple of Christ. I am happy to have known and worked with him.”

After ordination Lukas was sent to Rome to study Mariology. It wasn’t a case of just wanting a degree. We knew of his passion for Our Lady, the Consolata – these studies were a way to get to know and love her better. He met his death on the road – on that very road he had so often traveled to bring Our Lady’s consolation to our poor and needy brothers.

I have lost a dear friend; in spite of our different personalities we always understood and helped each other. He had no secrets from his friends and he was capable of expressing his affection – even to the point of having tears in his eyes. His visits to the seminary were always very welcome; he would tell us about his missionary experiences and would encourage everyone to prepare seriously for the missionary apostolate.

Thank you, Lukas, for your friendship. Thank you for the courage and joy you shared with me in those years the Lord allowed us to live together. May He receive you into His peace.

Father Dietrich Pendawazima

Father
SERGIO GRUPPO
1930 – 2002

Father Sergio was born in Arzignano on February 13, 1930, the son of Giuseppe Gruppo and Anna Remonato. He entered the Institute in 1947, made his religious profession in 1953 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1956. He worked as an assistant/professor for one year in Bevera and then went to Portugal where he continued the same sort of work until 1966. He started attending the annual Gregorian Week at Fatima and was subsequently awarded a diploma in Gregorian Chant from the Lisbon Center for Gregorian Studies – this made him a qualified professor of music and organist at the Fatima Sanctuary.

From 1966 to 1970 he was professor of music at the theological seminary in Turin and at the same time continued his studies in Gregorian Chant at the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music in Milan. His musical talents were devoted to the service of the liturgy; he enriched the Portugal with a collection of chants *Cantate Domino* and the Italian musical repertoire with a collection of chants *Canticum Novum*. He made a similar contribution to Colombia's liturgical music: *Cantemos al Dios de la vida*. He prepared a collection of Ecuadorian native religious songs.

In 1970 he was named superior of the Varallo Sesia house and three years later he was back in Turin as the Regional Director of Mission Promotion. In 1979 he was assigned to Colombia where he worked as part of the Tocaima team: initially he was an assistant pastor and then became the pastor at Nariño-Guataquí. From 1984 to 1990 he was the novice master at Bucaramanga. He was then transferred to Ecuador where he did pastoral work for five years – initially at Punin and then at Licto in the diocese of Riobamba. He began to suffer from Parkinson's disease and from 1995 to 1997 was under medical care in Turin. He was convinced that he could still be of use in the missions and so returned to Ecuador – but after only a few months he was forced to face reality and return to Italy. He moved definitively to Alpignano where he composed his last Mass and endowed the chapel with a beautiful harmonium. His sister Marisa was a constant companion during his long Calvary which came to a close on June 28 – at five o'clock in the morning he went to Our Father's House. His funeral Mass was celebrated the following day, Father Emanuele Maggioni presided at the Mass and Father Claudio Brualdi, former Regional Superior from Colombia, spoke. The celebration closed with a farewell at which Father Ugo Luise officiated and Father Ignazio Mondin spoke very movingly. On Monday, July 1, his remains were taken for burial at Brugherio where another funeral service was celebrated.

Father Giuseppe Villa

TESTIMONIAL OF FATHER GIUSEPPE MINA

I met him on his arrival at the IMC Apostolic House in Vittorio Veneto in 1945 while the Second World War was still in progress. As his spiritual director I grew close to him. He was shy but eager to hurry through his studies so that he could become a valued Consolata Missionary.

Those were hard times and it wasn't long before we ran short of food; we did everything we could to keep the center open since this kept us independent. Later I was sent to the Brothers house in Comotto and lost sight of Sergio, but I never forgot his balanced, poised, expansive personality full of *joie de vivre*. I know that he suffered long-term illnesses but through virtue and patience he overcame these setbacks. His mother was a constant source of help and support during this time. In 1953 he consecrated himself to the missions and in 1956 was ordained to the priesthood.

Meeting him later I realized his vocation for the missions had matured and put down deep roots. I was aware that he chosen the "here and now" of mission work (Superior at Varallo Sesia) over the opportunity to study music the Institute offered him. He had so many natural gifts; he loved both singing and playing music.

He spoke to me about his desire to go off to the missions – but his departure was always being postponed. Finally he was assigned to Colombia. He was master of novices from 1984 to 1990 and wrote to me for advice. He suffered because he felt he was misunderstood.

I was not in close contact afterwards but I know that he was involved in apostolic experimentation in Ecuador – a genuine pioneer. The sickness that later proved his Calvary brought him back to Italy. He was eager to work once more in the front lines and did everything he could to return to the missions,.

In the meantime he renewed acquaintance with people in Italy; these ties became closer during the years he lived at the Casa Beato Giuseppe Allamano. He learned to use a computer for writing and reading – and continued using it during the Christmas and Easter 2002 seasons. His sister, Marisa, always close at hand, helped him with the computer and Father Romolo Lumetti gave him a hand with his correspondence. There came a time when he could no longer speak or move – he couldn't brush flies from his face – but he never lost his poise, never lost his smile. It was a type of martyrdom

The ups and downs of summer heat made it difficult for him to breathe. He even had trouble swallowing Holy Communion. The tireless Father Genta did everything he could to alleviate this difficult situation.

On June 28, 2002 – the anniversary of his ordination – he died at 5:00 AM... I think back on his beautiful and elegantly published Colombian popular song texts which continues to have such an impact in that part of the world. Song, faith, death and resurrection come together in Father Sergio's efforts to make life a mission song.

TESTIMONIAL OF FATHER ANTONIO BONANOMI

For many years of my life I lived with Father Sergio Gruppo. During the years together we shared the same spirit and ideas.

He began his work as a professor/assistant in Bevera; was then assigned to Portugal and later became the superior at Varallo Sesia during the difficult years that followed the Second Vatican Council. I came to Varallo to be in charge of formation – I was full of new ideas: get rid of the cassock, put everyone in public schools, create a richer, more human foundation for formation, begin studying new ways of being missionaries.

Several Fathers in the community reacted strongly to these new ideas and Father Sergio was initially somewhat uncertain – very soon though he became a peacemaker. We understood and liked each other very much. He was both wise and serene; he supported my program but softened my approach and acted as an intermediary with those Fathers who opposed me. He fostered mutual understanding and his calm presence was beneficial to both me personally and the seminary as well. He accepted renewal but at the same time defended discipline, order, cleanliness and structure.

We then both went to Bedizzole and the Regional Secretariats were established. Father Sergio was in charge of the secretariat for mission promotion, Fathers Mura and Pellegrino were responsible for vocation promotion and I had the secretariat for formation. Meetings and collaboration with other missionary institutes led to the creation of the Unified Secretariat for Mission Promotion (SUAM) as a place for studying new ideas and situations that affected our mission secretariats. Because of his wisdom and talent, Father Gruppo was chosen as the first secretary of SUAM.

The secretariats were later disbanded but we did not lose contact with each other. Between 1975 and 1978 we met occasionally to consider the possibility of working together as a missionary team. In 1978 five of us (A. Bonanomi, E. Roattino, S. Mura, V. Pellegrino, S. Gruppo and I) requested to go together to Colombia – this was the beginning of our experience in Tocaima. For five years we lived together even though we worked in different villages – Father Gruppo worked at Nariño-Guataquí. While the rest of us were somewhat impetuous he was calm and composed and so we elected him our superior.

At the end of five wonderful years the group disbanded; Father Gruppo was appointed master of novices and I went to work among the Indians in Toribio. Later Father Gruppo went to Ecuador to work among Indians as well and we felt ourselves joined in our efforts to create an authentic apostolate among native peoples. In synthesis I would say we were united by three strong bonds: shared ideas, common work and life together. These elements bound our lives together.

His Personality

I would like to emphasize three important aspects of Father Gruppo's personality.

1. He was extraordinarily human. He was a man of enormous sensitivity which sometimes caused him to suffer. He felt things deeply and expressed this sensitivity in many ways: he was attentive to details – birthdays, name-days, health. I sometimes told him he was “like a mother” – he would worry about a brother who coughed or someone else who stayed up too late. He sometimes came and turned off my light at midnight –forcing me to go to sleep. He was a wonderful human being.

He was also an artistic human being. He was a musician and heard music in his heart. Returning from a village he would sometimes sit down and compose music – music that echoed the sounds in his heart, his reaction to the village he had just visited. At his death he left an enormous quantity of musical material – evidence of his deep and abundant musical sensibility.

I would also add that I never heard him speak ill of anyone. Criticism was foreign to his nature. Insensitive or discourteous criticism caused him pain, to the extent that he was sometimes reduced to tears by what he considered a lack of charity. He learned to control this sensitivity and direct himself towards charity. The move from Italy to the missions was certainly not easy for him. He went from being a great musician to one who works among the poor. The part of the parish he worked in was certainly the very poorest. He showed a sensitivity and delicacy in working with the poor that were an example to all of us.

2. He was a good disciple of Jesus. He wasn't one to speak about Jesus all day long – but he took the Gospel very seriously. The Gospel was his life. He showed this by praying well, celebrating the Eucharist well, being attentive to the poor, being merciful, compassionate and eager for the Kingdom of God. Father Sergio's spiritual life was a great example for me. For him the Gospel wasn't just a book – it was life. I would sometimes tease him, “You are Nathaniel, an Israelite in whom there is no guile ...” and this was the truth. For him everything was yes, yes and no, no. His option for the poor was in no way ideological – it was something that came from his heart. He was a witness, not an ideologue.

3. Missionary Zeal. I admired his zeal very much – he traveled a long road. Along with others Father Gruppo and I established a periodical – AMICO – during our time in theology. This newsletter was addressed to diocesan seminaries; we sought and received letters from missionaries, etc. We mimeographed the bulletin and sent it to our seminaries. Our purpose was to define and describe the missions – not from books and theories – but from life in the missions. If our group accomplished anything it was to make the Institute think about the missions. The culmination of this “thinking about the missions” was the 1975 Chapter – the “Chapter of the Missions” *par excellence*.

We thought it urgent to live the missions in a new way – working as a team, for example. But also with a new spirit: we ought not identify the mission with missionary propaganda and sacramentalization but with rediscovering the source of evangelization. The missionary team would be a means of giving witness. Within the team we had to appreciate and exploit the diversity of charisms: priests, lay people, sisters.

Father Gruppo brought this wealth of new ideas to SUAM; I did the same at the National Center for Vocations – the ideas were contagious and spread both within and outside the Institute.

Father Gruppo contributed his thoughts and a good deal of his life to all this. I admired the way he, a great musician, put music aside in Tocaima lest it proved an obstacle to his missionary work. He gave up so many things that were close to his heart for the sake of the Kingdom.

I admired Father Sergio. He was a humble and reserved man – but in my eyes he was a man who was extraordinary in ordinary things. I have known and respected many missionaries but Father Sergio and his ability to bring together humanity, Gospel and mission were special.

**Father
TULLIO MARTINELLI
1914 – 2002**

Father Tullio was born in Chiazzola-Ala (Trent) on February 4, 1914 and entered the Institute in 1926. He consecrated himself to God in 1936 and was ordained to the priesthood the following year. He spent

the first years of his ministry as assistant to the novices and theologians (1936 – 1939). During the war (1939 – 1945) he was the director of the house in Vittorio Veneto. In 1947 he left for Brazil where he worked until 1959. He was the pastor of São Manuel and director of the seminary; he built a new seminary and a house for the sisters. His fragile physical constitution reacted to these years of intense work. In a letter to Father Domenico Fiorina, the Superior General, in early 1950 he wrote about his many responsibilities, “I really don’t know which way to turn or where to begin ... today ... I am continuing to receive injections and camphor and almost haven’t got the strength to write. Yesterday I did too much. But all things considered, your blessing and Royal Bee Jelly have renewed my strength. I have seldom worked as I have in these last months without taking a day off. In any event – Forward *in Domino!* As long as I have strength I have the will.”

Father Tullio’s only concerns were not just his work and his health – he was concerned for the welfare of the community. “I think Providence has been especially good to us – there is perfect harmony among our fathers. All agree that this has been our best year at São Manuel. I would add that it is the year in which we have worked hardest in spite of setbacks. I confess that I am often shamed by the dedication of our fathers who deserve much more help and support than I am able to provide. And to think that they are always urging me to take time off and to rest. They try and spare me the harder tasks. Father Bisio must be protecting us from heaven.” (Letter to Father Fiorina – September 2, 1950). “Our progress is not just material, it is spiritual as well. All the fathers at São Manuel work tirelessly – almost excessively - and in perfect harmony. We are visiting all the families of the city and outskirts with a sort of *Peregrinatio Mariae*. Three houses every evening and therefore three fathers busy every evening ... We have done three hundred such visits out of a thousand so far. I think Jesus and Mary are happy with the fathers at São Manuel – I think you can be too” (Letter to Father Fiorina, May 25, 1951). When things went badly he showed himself to be a man of deep faith: “How heavy I find responsibility. I never sought it out, I always looked at any thought of it as a temptation – to be avoided – since I didn’t know how to exercise it worthily ... God knows what He is doing. We can only bow our head and carry the cross” (Letter to Father Fiorina, March 5, 1952).

In 1954 he was sent to São Paulo to supervise the building of the Regional House.

In the 1959 Chapter he was elected a General Councilor and was at the same time appointed General Administrator. He was confirmed in office during the following chapter in 1969.

In 1976 after sixteen years in office and in spite of health problems he requested permission to work in Roraima. On June 20, 1976, he wrote to Father Mario Bianchi, Superior General, from Boa Vista, “... I do what I can plugging up holes. I am the superior at Calungá, I am a substitute for Father Zintu in the school and on Saturday and Sunday I go to Mucajai. As long as my strength holds out I am ready for any job or task that can help out. I am trying to be a unifying force – bringing calm to tense situations. I feel pretty much at home with the fathers and am happy. Certainly my health is what it is. The climate in this season of heavy rain is very humid – I have problems from time to time and feel weak. I hope I don’t contract malaria - that would really knock me out. If that is God’s will, though, I will accept it.”

He was briefly the Regional Superior at Roraima before he went to work among the Indians in the Catrimani mission. In 1983 his poor health forced a move to Rio de Janeiro where he worked as a parish assistant. He returned to Roraima in 1985 and was the Regional Administrator for two years.

In 1988 he returned to Italy and went to live in Bevera. On March 5, 1997 Father Piero Trabucco, Superior General, congratulated him on the sixtieth anniversary of his ordination. He answered, “My heart is so full of gratitude to God that I can forget my problems. My years of priesthood have been beautiful, full of grace, work, responsibility – I couldn’t have asked for more. There was suffering, weakness and misunderstanding – but I looked on these things as gifts from God to complete the Passion of Christ in me, an integral part of my priesthood.

“May Our Lady, the Consolata, look after me in this last phase of my life while I await in blessed hope the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ! I feel great gratitude to the Institute I have loved so much. From the time of my novitiate my mind was set on being a missionary - ‘Either a Consolata Missionary or nothing!’ I am grateful too to my superiors who placed too much confidence in me, and to whom I have always responded *fiat* even when it was difficult. I am now serene and at peace. ‘Every night before going to sleep I pray, Lord into your hands I commend my spirit’.”

Father Tullio had a tumor and spent his last months in the infirmary in Turin. On July 8, he went back to Our Father’s house. His funeral was celebrated at the Motherhouse on July 10. Father Ernesto

Viscardi presided and Father Silvano Sabatini preached the homily. Father Viscardi accompanied his remains to Mori in the Trentino to be buried in his family tomb.

Editors of Da Casa Madre

TESTIMONIALS

Active and Delicate

I was only fourteen years old and newly arrived in the IMC seminary in Vittorio Veneto when the superiors were changed. Father Tullio Martinelli replaced Father Ghiotti. His youth impressed me – he was barely 25 years old – as did the tactful way he treated the young boys in the seminary and the fathers on the staff who were older than he was.

The war was soon upon us and the war meant hunger. Genuine hunger. Father Tullio did everything he could think of to provide food for his 80 little apostles.

I remember one particular event. He went out looking for something to flavor the very thin soup we lived on. While returning he fainted on the train – he was overwhelmed from carrying two enormous suitcases filled with lard he had scrounged at S. Vendemmiano. Generous people brought him back to the seminary and even helped him avoid the thugs from the ration board.

As soon as he could he bought three hectares of land to grow corn – this also provided cover for purchases of corn from neighbors. Government controls and penalties were severe for anyone who exceeded the amount of food allowed by ration cards. He would not even consider closing the minor seminary and sending his little apostles home for lack of food.

As he moved on to fill other positions in the Institute he never lost his natural delicacy or his interest in his former students. On his official visits to Africa and America he made every effort to seek them out in remote jungles and distant pampas.

Father Egidio Crema

He helped people to do their best

I came to know Father Tullio Martinelli in São Manuel in 1949 when he was the superior of the seminary. His health was always problematic and he was a man of few words but once one penetrated the surface one discovered a very sensitive, capable and intelligent person who understood problems and would support those he met. He never raised his voice; he knew what he wanted and persevered until he got it. He had the gift of supporting people and shouldering his own responsibilities without imposing.

Over time he gained experience in supervising construction projects; this began at São Manuel where he built a new seminary for the numerous students and a house for the sisters. It was this ability coupled with his natural talent for administration that led to his appointment as General Administrator. Even from Turin he maintained strong ties with Brazil.

I was appointed regional treasurer at a time when our region enjoyed a considerable increase in vocations and was consequently involved in many building projects (seminaries, houses, parishes). During this time of great activity Father Tullio provided close assistance and encouragement. His experience was a source of continual assurance.

He and Father Bindo Meldolesi came to Brazil immediately after my appointment and together we made a tour of inspection in Roraima which was a delegation of our region. That trip made a profound impression on Father Tullio. He saw with his own eyes the stark situation in which our missionaries lived and worked: there was extreme poverty and an almost total lack of assistance for missionaries who spent entire months away from the missions visiting out of the way places ... I don't think there was a more difficult situation anywhere else in the Institute. Our very regional house in Boa Vista was in a pitiful condition. All of this made Father Tullio eager to reverse this situation.

The first thing he insisted on was a far-reaching project that could be presented to the government organization "Alliance for Progress." He himself worked on drawing up this project and made efforts in

the capital to see that it was approved. Father Tullio's ideas reached far into the future. He spoke about establishing three missions among the Yanomami Indians (one for the Macuxi, one for the Waiwai and one for the Waimiria Troari) along with schools in the savanna and a workers' training school in the city. The project received preliminary approval but the governor of Roraima's opposition blocked it.

In spite of this Father Tullio continued his work on behalf of Roraima. He was responsible for the fathers' House in Boa Vista and the workers' training school in Calungà which made history at the time. Then along with Msgr. Conti he backed the cathedral of Boa Vista. He gave this project his full support. He had plans drawn up in Italy and then followed construction closely. All of this was evidence of his deep attachment to Roraima.

Another important project he and Father Domenico Fiorina, the Superior General, sponsored was the international seminary in São Paulo. This seminary was close to Father Tullio's heart. He himself had overseen the plans and had provided funds for buying land in the city. This project, unfortunately, was never completed.

This was the first time that Father Tullio provided funds for the region. The General Administration had no money but he was especially talented in helping people raise funds. With his encouragement we organized a variety of fund raising campaigns; he taught us how to approach the government for financial assistance for our work. Father Tullio was always at our side: he urged and encouraged us; he helped us discover local solutions to our problems.

Obviously Roraima remained close to his heart and when he finished his work as General Administrator he asked to be sent there to work at the Catrimani Mission. Something that always astounded me was how in spite of his fragile health he always found the strength to carry on. Life at Catrimani at that time was extremely hard but this didn't stop him from plunging into work there – he believed so strongly in the mission to the Indians. Even when he returned to Italy Catrimani was never far from his thoughts and he continued to collect and send help to the mission.

In the last days before he died he underwent an operation on his femur and was semi-conscious for two days after the operation. The nurse in attendance asked what the word "Catrimani" meant – he repeated it often during the night. An indication of his attachment to the mission.

I visited Father Tullio every day during the last two months of his life in the Turin infirmary with a bone tumor that caused him much pain. At first he was upset and impatient. He was accustomed to handling problems on his own; he was impotent in the face of sickness and found it difficult to depend on others.

In the beginning I would stand at his bedside in silence. Gradually he began to speak and become himself again. One could see his inner turmoil, the gradual purification and eventual acceptance of the situation ... it was something impressive to witness. All of this was slow, painful but increasingly apparent – it was his preparation for death. He was well aware of the seriousness of his sickness and knew the end was imminent. He prayed a great deal and through prayer came to accept his helplessness. He asked Father Armanni for a small radio so he could listen to Radio Maria and continue to pray during the night. His last days were a crucible of suffering – he was thoroughly purified and accepted God's will with serenity.

Father Silvano Sabatini

Father and Teacher

Koelliker Hospital ... July 8, 2002, 4:00 AM: Father Tullio went to Our Father after nine days of suffering and silent waiting. Nine days of simple watching. When I went to his bedside he said nothing. He simply looked at me and that look was a synthesis of all I had learned from twenty years of meetings, conversations and financial work together. It was especially during those two years we worked together closely (1974 and 1975) that I came to know the man and the missionary.

I had barely finished my studies and had had brief missionary experience in Roraima when I was suddenly thrown into the world of finances under the guidance of Father Tullio. After a few days he had me appointed a notary public and faced with my obvious fear of making a mistake he told me with his characteristic calm, "Don't worry whatever mistakes you make will be attributed to me." I was shocked,

but his words gave me motivation. I would do anything to avoid disappointing him. His words symptomatic of his fatherly attitude – he was a confrère who inspired courage and confidence, he was a teacher eager to make his student independent.

“A Mentor.” Yes, Father Tullio was a mentor – he taught balance, common sense and humanity. His attitude, his virtue, in no way stopped him from asserting his ideas forcefully. In his sixteen years as a Councilor and General Administrator there were certainly rough moments and disagreements in the Council. Father Tullio was sometimes discouraged – but he never gave up; he overcame discouragement with faith.

He would struggle fiercely because he believed equally fiercely that our money belonged to the poor; it came from the sacrifices of those who were only slightly less poor. Unjustified expenditures would disgust him!

I would like to conclude by quoting something he said in a homily during a 1975 financial council meeting: “When we pray we put our hands together and lift them to heaven – like a beggar seeking alms.”

Goodbye Tullio, Father and Mentor.

Father Silvano Cacciari