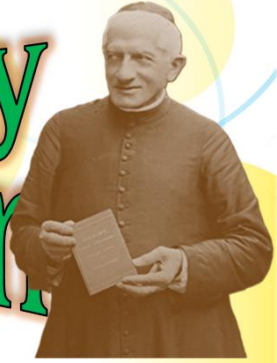


YEAR OF COMMUNITY LIFE

02/03/2026 - 02/03/2027



One single Family for the same Mission



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COMMUNITY LIFE AND CONSTITUTIONS

The Founder has always applied himself with great commitment to the drafting of the legislative texts of the Institute, even before its foundation, starting from a draft compiled in 1891 and then from the first Rules of 1901. Then followed the Constitutions of 1909 and those of 1923, including also the constitutions of the Sisters in 1913 and their Rules of 1916. In a conference to the sisters on September 28, 1913, Allamano explained the reason for his special attention to the legislative texts: "St. Vincent de Paul, urged several times by his religious to write and give them the Holy Rule, did not decide to do what he did except at the end of his life. He wanted them to be practiced first to prove their rightness. [...] Today I too finally propose your Constitutions to you. All things that you have already practiced so far. They did not descend from heaven, as happened to certain founding saints, but they have the same authority; they are the result of experience, of serious studies on many other rules, of special prayers, and they bear the revision and approval of the Cardinal Archbishop."¹

Allamano was convinced that before the Rule there is the person of the missionary and the community that welcomes it with fraternal love. That the Institute he founded was a "family" has always been his ardent aspiration: "We must have family love. Yes, I want and there must be *amorem fraternitatis*".² The mission would come later, as the fruit of a mature tree, as the fruitfulness of mutual love. In a conference to the missionaries on April 2, 1911, the Founder asked the question: "Is the community good?" He revealed to them that Camisassa's trip to Kenya was motivated mainly by the desire to examine precisely the progress of community life among the missionaries in Africa and then "to agree with them on the Constitutions, the Rules, the prayers, etc., all things that were written down and made as a formulary: in this way they will have everyone's advice and they will be more willing to observe the rules made by themselves".³ Rule and life, legislation and concrete practice, always had to walk together. Legislation, in the vision of the Founder, helps community life and favors the right responses to the needs of missionaries, communities and mission.

The Rules, with which the Institute is endowed, have evolved over the years, but always starting from the charismatic root desired by the Founder, from the "spirit" that he, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wanted to impress on them. And at the base of this "spirit" we

¹ Conf. MC I, 28.

² IMC Conf. II, 212.

³ IMC Conf. I, 389.

find the *community-family*. Even today, while the whole Institute is preparing to revise its Constitutions, with the contribution of all, it is opportune to keep our foot firmly on this basis which is like a "cornerstone". Woe to us if we don't. We would run the risk of founding another Institute, and no longer be able to call St. Joseph Allamano our "founding father".

Some elements of the "family spirit" that should never be forgotten...

Let us now dwell briefly on some aspects that give strength to the family spirit and that we find reflected in our Constitutions and in our other normative texts. These aspects can enlighten us now in our commitment to adapt the Constitutions to the progress of the Church and to the changes in society.

The Founder - father

St. Joseph Allamano is the 'father of our family'. He was so at the beginning of the Institute, when with much effort and love he laid the foundations and gave us his spirit, the charism, received from the Holy Spirit. It continues to be so today, as we celebrate 125 years of our existence. It must also be so in the future because God has chosen him to endow the Church with a new charism that for us, his sons and daughters, is and will always be our indispensable reference. His holiness sanctioned by the Church with his Canonization further commits us not only to follow his missionary method, but above all to imitate his holiness of life. "If the Allamano is not 'consciousness' in us, that is, the measure of our identity; if his spirit does not become a form assumed in our being; if we do not form a 'culture' that instinctively refers to his teaching and his heart, we will never arrive at a way of life that reproduces the charism he left to the Institute."⁴

The father is always a father! The family is always family, provided that it does not deviate from the father. We must always feel the desire to go back to him to draw inspiration for the present and future of the Institute. The generative power of the Founder is not his own, but he received it from God. It follows that he is a father in a spirit of faith and we are children and family in faith. What binds us is the certainty that God has called us together and sends us together, through the mediation of the Founder and the Institute.

"Life in common" for the mission

The terminology used by the Founder, such as "family spirit", "esprit de corps", "unity of purpose", was born from his conviction that without harmony and brotherly love between the members of a community and of the whole Institute, there could be no effective missionary work. This he said both referring to the spiritual journey of the missionary, but above all to missionary commitment. The work of the Institute is a work of the Church and therefore there must be attachment to the Church and obedience to her magisterium.

Allamano gladly valued St. Paul while dealing with the theme of common life (Eph 4:1-7; Rom 12:4; 1 Cor 12:12ff.). An example when he speaks of fraternal charity: "Today this is spoken of in the Epistle of St. Paul (Ephesians 4:1-7). See St. Paul how beautiful he is! We are all brothers of the same vocation; we are all brothers of the same hope... This is what he says

⁴ *Chiamati e inviati*, Ed. Missioni Consolata, p. 71.

about all Christians, but it applies all the more to us, who must always be together, who must walk on the same path."⁵

In the context of community life, Allamano emphasized obedience as an indispensable element in the search for God's will. He wanted it as the first of our religious vows, because it helps the missionary to put the search for God's will before every initiative and project. Together with obedience, he felt the need to reaffirm the importance of the role of the Superior within the community, as animator of the journey of the community itself and of each individual member.

Some means that help community life are now part of the heritage of our living together, inherited from Allamano and developed in the course of our history, without which we can no longer call ourselves communities: fraternal dialogue, communication of life, fraternal correction, the community project of life, collaboration with the living forces of the local Church.

A strong spirituality

Spirituality strengthens the bonds of union between us at the service of the Institute and the mission. "Holiness" is the word so loved by the Founder and which we too have recalled in many ways at this time, because of his canonization and the centenary of his birth into heaven. Knowing that the holiness of our Father has been recognized by the Church becomes a further incentive for us, his children, to treasure it.

The reason that convinced Allamano to insistently propose missionary holiness, in addition to his personal experience, was certainly of an apostolic nature. This is evident in his teaching: "Some believe that being a missionary consists entirely in preaching, running, baptizing, saving souls; No, no! This is only the secondary end: we sanctify ourselves first and then others. The more holy one is, the more souls he will save".⁶ "We must first be good and holy, then we will make others good; otherwise, we will not be good either for others nor for ourselves"⁷

The Founder expressed this conviction using different expressions. We know them well as examples of spiritual intensity. The most famous: "First saints, then missionaries" is said in many ways⁸, as in a conference to the sisters on October 16, 1921: "You are here to make yourselves holy. Don't say: 'I am here to become a missionary', no, first a saint and then a missionary."⁹

"Doing good well"

We know that Allamano does not propose the ideal of holiness to us in an abstract or generic way. His was a "concrete" and "targeted" pedagogy for us "Consolata missionaries". He was convinced that he had a spirit and a method and tried to communicate them to us. He had inherited the general criterion from the model par excellence who is Jesus ("He did all things well": Mk 7:37), together with Mary, especially in the mystery of the Visitation. Secondly, he had learned from the experience of the saints, especially St. Francis de Sales and St. Joseph

⁵ IMC Conf., III, 332.

⁶ IMC Conf., I, 249-250. We recall how he modified the text of the 1910 Directory in his own handwriting: "The students [...] always aim [...] to become saints and to make themselves fit to save many souls" in "[...] and thus to make themselves suitable", emphasizing the link between holiness and apostolate.

⁷ IMC Conf., I, 279.

⁸ Cf. Conf. IMC, I, 619; II, 82, 127, 375; III, 174, 258, 385, 478, 480, 659, 676.

⁹ Conf. MC, III, 290, 292; cf. also MC, III, 16, where there are similar words.

Cafasso. The pedagogical direction was basically this: - Good done well, in small things, with constancy, without trumpeting.

The Founder explained several times what it means, in practice, to do everything well. Let us mention here the "four thoughts to spend the day well", which he had taken from Cafasso and which he proposed to the young missionary students, giving them written behind a picture. According to a testimony of Don Bosco, Cafasso proposed these four thoughts: "Do everything as Our Lord Jesus Christ himself would do it; in the way in which we would like to have done it when we are asked to account for it at the tribunal of God; as if it were the last thing of our lives, and if we had nothing more to accomplish."¹⁰

Questions for personal or community reflection

1. The spirit of the Founder in our lives today

Guiding question: *How is the spirit of the Founder shaping my way of being a missionary today and our way of living as a community-family?*

2. The community as a place that generates fraternity and mission

Guiding question: *What dynamics, attitudes and daily choices make our community a place that generates unity, fraternity and mission, and which instead reveal fragilities that require conversion?*

3. The spirituality that guides choices and lifestyle

Guiding question: *How is our concrete spirituality; "first saints, then missionaries" and "doing good well", guiding our decisions, our lifestyle and the way we face the current challenges of the Institute and of the Church?*



¹⁰ LUIGI NICOLIS DI ROBILANT, *S. Giuseppe Cafasso*, ed. Santuario della Consolata, Turin 1960, p. 787.