

"The Missionary must have a big heart!" Blessed Giuseppe Allamano

«We are the fruit of our past, / we are the very life that has grown within us
like the trunk of solitary trees / with signs, colours and imperfections
that winds and rains have fixed / forever on their bark.

We are also the time spent: / it is up to us to choose whether to become new men
or remain old / like our years and our memories ». (Romano Battaglia).

The Church, which by its very nature is missionary, fulfils its divine mandate if it becomes an "outgoing" Church, that is, if it puts all its energies in motion so that the message of Christ, starting from Jerusalem, passing through all of Judea and Samaria, reaches all the ends of the earth (cf. Acts 1,8).

The title of this volume "They Went Out to Plough the Field" by Alberto Trevisiol is therefore attractive and of high symbolic value for those who care about the mission. To carry out the evangelical commitment, such as that of the Consolata Missionaries at the dawn of the nineteenth century, one cannot leave without a specific mandate from the Church. You go "out" in the name of the Apostolic Church, and you do not go alone, but you go out in a group, as the verb "went out" points out. A group of missionaries set out in 1902 to continue the work of evangelization begun by Jesus.

The going "out" recalls God's command to Abraham: "Leave your country, your people and your father's household (...) and Abraham went" (cf. Gen. 12.1). Like Abraham, the Consolata Missionaries also set out into the unknown, completely unaware of what they would encounter. However, they were clear about the purpose of their going: "they went out to plough the field." Their real goal was to plough the field entrusted to them.

The going "out" in this second part of the title of the book becomes paradigmatic and brings to mind what Paul of Tarsus said to the Christian communities of Corinth when he was notified of the existence of factions within them: "But who is Apollo? What is Paul? Only Servants (...). I planted, Apollo watered, but it was God who made it grow" (1 Cor 3: 5-6). And again, we can mention the episode in which Jesus sends the seventy-two disciples. The text notes: "He designated seventy-two others and sent them two by two in front of him to every city and place where he was about to go" (Lk 10: 1).

Here the mind of the Lord is clear and precise. He sends "others" to "plough the field", that is, to prepare it so that when he arrives, he can plant the good seed of the word in the hearts of the crowds. "The going" of the Consolata Missionaries to Kenya must be seen in this perspective as the book describes their deeds in this line of thought. They went out to plough the field waiting for the Lord to take action to plant his Word of salvation in the hearts of the peoples.

We are pleased to present this work to the attention of the Anglophone-speaking missionaries to remember, to make a heritage. This volume, as stated in the subtitle: "The Pages of History of the Consolata Missionaries in Kenya: 1902-1981", describes with clarity, skill, and competence the fundamental steps that the Missionaries undertook to plough the field in Kenya.

It should also be noted that their field of work is remarkably diverse since they have tried hard to consider the integral development of the person. For this purpose, the punctual work of "evangelization" of the people is carried out hand in hand with human promotion. For this, they have disseminated the camp with schools of various types and, in order not to leave sectors of society in a state of neglect, they have created shelters for orphans and built dispensaries for the sick, who were usually left to themselves.

What is nowadays called "inculturation" and "respect for the cultures and traditions of peoples", the Consolata Missionaries had done very well with regular visits to villages to meet everyone; mostly the sick. They used to talk to everyone to understand everyone's situation and glimpse possible support interventions. This immersion in the cultural and environmental fabric was fruitful for the simple fact that all the missionaries were able to use the local language and, therefore, to establish a fraternal relationship with everyone. From the voice of the people there came the adhesion to cooperation and the commitment to walk together to make the field more and more ploughed.

In going through the pages of this weighty volume, one clearly perceives the presence of a missionary strategy, which is of great importance. All the Missionaries worked with commitment and enthusiasm so that the field assigned to them could produce fruit. They saw a rich and luxuriant harvest sprout and did not stop to contemplate it, but made it become a generative matrix of other fields to be ploughed. It is the same dynamism that has also occurred in Kenya. The church of Nyeri, now a flourishing olive tree with abundant fruit, is placed in the "exit" to go and plough the field of the Meru area and then that of Marsabit. Even these

two plants, which have become “sister” Churches, were nourished by the same evangelical sap of the mother Church.

The Consolata Missionaries understood Jesus' saying well: “The harvest is plentiful”. This is why they set out on the journey because, in itself, the Word of Jesus has an intrinsic strength that cannot remain closed in a limited geographical area.

Although the Consolata Missionaries favoured the idea of an outgoing and itinerant Church to generate new realities, they were also concerned with providing local pastors for the flourishing Christian communities. For this purpose, they opened a seminary to welcome generous young people who could continue to weed the land, but also to take care of the ripe harvest.

This volume should be read in a diachronic key to discover all the development phases of the mission in Kenya. We would not appreciate the book if we do not perceive the generating principles that characterized the evangelizing work of the Consolata Missionaries and, also if we did not read between the lines of the book, all the passion, perseverance and total unconditional dedication of all the Missionaries, who left their family, their homeland, their culture and their traditions to go "to the ends of the earth" first of all to plough the field and then to present an abundant harvest to the Lord.

The volume attracts, for the missionary impetus it describes, created by real people who have made mission the meaning and value of their lives. A mission born in Kenya but which has developed and grown pushing the Consolata Institute and its Missionaries to go out on the paths of the whole world, according to the vision and dream of our dear Founder, Blessed Giuseppe Allamano.

We thank Father Trevisiol for this gift, fruit of careful and profound research and we implore the Lord Jesus to help us rediscover the enthusiasm of early evangelization through these pages where total sacrifice, dedication and donation were accomplished.

Fr. Stefano Camerlengo, IMC

The Superior General of the Consolata Missionaries

Rome, 04 October 2020, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi!