



Rome, 10 October 2019
Feast of St. Daniel Comboni

Not that I do boast of preaching the Gospel, since it is a duty that has been laid on me. I should be punished if I did not preach it! (1 Cor 9, 16)

But the missionary trusts in the mercy of God and, ready to fight, goes to work in the vineyard guided by the hope that never abandons him. In the meantime, with a fair wind, the voyage begins. (WR 4946)

Dear Confreres, greetings and prayers from Rome.

This month of October is marked by two very meaningful ecclesial events: the Extraordinary Mission Month and the Special Synod for Amazonia. For us Comboni Missionaries, it is also marked by the grateful memory of our Founding Father, Saint Daniel Comboni. On 30 September last, in our capacity as the General Council, we had the grace of participating, together with other missionary Institutes of Italian foundation, in an audience with Pope Francis during which he encouraged us to live out our evangelising mission with the same passion and courage our Founders had. The life of St. Daniel Comboni revolves around the urgency of bringing the Gospel to the heart of Africa. His spirituality and his anthropology are rooted in the Heart of Christ from which bursts forth a profound certainty of the love of God for all humanity and especially for the most needy. St. Daniel Comboni combined spirituality and mission in a remarkable way: he lived what he believed and succeeded in concretising it in a program that projects the vision of the Kingdom into the context of his times.

We too are today living in an epoch of great upheavals which present us with many challenges but also with opportunities to live our mission to the full. This is a time of grace that we are asked to live and it demands of us a permanent attitude of conversion in faithfulness to the Gospel. The Pope has reminded us that missionary action can only be lived in a deep relationship of trust in Jesus. When we read the writings of Comboni, we come to realise that, despite his sufferings, he always found enormous support in his belief in a Father who would never abandon him. Each one of us is called to incarnate in his life the charism of which we are witnesses, despite our shortcomings which, when we allow ourselves to be healed by experiencing the love of the Father, cease to be a hindrance.

The vocation *ad gentes, ad vitam, ad extra* and *ad pauperes* is what constitutes our identity within the Church and also in society in general. We leave our families, homelands and cultures for the Risen Christ. Going forth is essential for our being missionaries, it means leaving our comfort zone to be born again in a new culture, within the human family where we share our joys, our sorrows and our hopes. Living with other peoples places us in a situation of vulnerability which, at the same time, bears witness that our choice of life is sustained by our faith and is shown in our passion for the Kingdom. It is also an invitation to the people of God to be always aware that they are continually “going forth” to make life a gift to others.

This year we are celebrating the year of interculturality and, in fact, our Institute is increasingly international, a sign of our desire to grow as a fraternity gathered around the Gospel, as Comboni himself desired. Living in an international community is a veritable school of humanity, which helps to develop new skills such as the ability to relate to others, something essential for the proclamation of the Gospel. The Writings of our Founder reveal his ability to build bridges between all sorts of people, regardless of their social status or nationality. The Plan for the Regeneration of Africa shows us his passion for the least and his complete confidence in people as the authors of their own history and co-responsible members of the Church. May the example of Comboni enlighten us so that we may live as an intercultural family in fraternity, a sign of God’s presence among us.

United with you all, through the intercession of Mary our Mother, Star of Evangelisation, and of St. Daniel Comboni, we wish you Happy Feast Day!

The General Council