



**“Rooted and
grounded in Love”**
(Eph 3:17)

**Booklet for community reflection
2017 - 2018**

THE SONS OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE (DON ORIONE)

PRESENTATION

Rome, 23 June 2017

145th anniversary of the birth of Don Orione

Dear Confreres,

a few weeks ago Pope Francis, on a pastoral visit to Genoa, actually 27th May, during a meeting with priests, consecrated people and seminarians, was replying to a question from a priest of the diocese, when to our surprise, he mentioned the name of our Father Founder.

The question was about guidance on how to *“live an intense spiritual life”* in the ministerial priesthood, given the *“complexity of modern life and many duties including administration”* which tend to lead one to live in a very dispersed and piecemeal way.

St. Luigi Orione is mentioned as a loving remembrance by Pope Francis at the end of a reflection in which he presents the model priest as one who, in his daily life, knows how to harmonize and balance the tension between *“meeting the Father and meeting people”* in imitation of *“Jesus’ style”*. This is a fundamental value. In fact, *“If we imagine the daily timetable of Jesus, reading the Gospels we can say that most of his time he spent in the street. That meant closeness to the people and their problems. He did not hide. Then in the evening many times he did hide in order to pray, to be with the Father”*.

Thus the *“first value”* is not to be afraid *“of movement and losing oneself in our time”*, and to decide not to lead a *“static life”* and to be *“in the street”* to be *“a man on the move, open to the surprises of God”*. All this is lived in the context *“of meeting”*: *“You, priest (we can also understand: You religious), you meet God, the Father, Jesus in the Eucharist, the faithful: you meet”*.

Now Don Orione appears, surprisingly, and with a very strong emphasis: ***“The priest (also here we can include religious) who leads a life of meeting, with the Lord in prayer, and with the people all***

through the day, is “totally worn out”, St. Luigi Orione used to say, “like an old rag”.

This was Don Orione! In fact he defined himself and defines us like this, *“We are and want to be nothing more than poor old rags, and here we are using a metaphor which means, TOTAL SACRIFICE OF ONESELF...”*

I have had the opportunity of reading the speech of the Pope and Genoa at the same time as reading the booklet of continuous formation prepared by the Provincial Vicars of the Northern Hemisphere under the coordination of the Vicar General, Fr Oreste Ferrari. I saw the harmony between the words of Pope Francis and the theme proposed for the second year of this six year session about “spirituality and charity”. (The first part of the Pope’s speech you will find in the appendix).

The booklet is certainly a valid instrument to help us make our own and deepen the spirituality, the lifestyle of Don Orione, the priest who, according to Pope Francis, *“led a life of meeting, with the Lord in prayer and with people all day long, so as to be torn to pieces, like an old rag”*. This is the power and essence of the “spirituality of charity”.

The booklet will help us also to reply to the fundamental questions of our being as consecrated Orionine men: *“Am I a man of meeting? Am I a man of the tabernacle? Am I a man of the street? Am I a man of the “ear”, who knows how to listen? Do I let myself be worn out by people?”*

Dear Confreres, I wish each one of you and every community a good journey of reflection and prayer. St. Luigi Orione will certainly accompany us, that man of movement and meeting, that charity man, who lived every moment of his life and his ministry with *“the sweetest and foolish love of God and people which is not of this world”*.

“Hail Mary and go ahead”

Fr. Tarcísio Vieira

INTRODUCTION

“Charity”: how many times Don Orione may have used this word, God only knows. *“Only charity will save the world”*, *“Charitas Christi urget nos”*, these are common sentences on the lips of Don Orione, which have become his mottos. We know very well that since Don Orione was a real *“Saint”*, in his mind charity was far from being mere philanthropy, nor was it part of a plan for personal fulfilment or satisfaction. Charity, for Don Orione, was the natural outcome of his attachment to Christ, a concrete way to bring to reality his *“Instaurare omnia in Christo”*.

We who are his children spread all over the world, run hundreds of institutions, small or big, and do it in his name. We must do it according to his style, though times have changed, needs have evolved, and society puts many limitations to our freedom of action.

What can we do so our works may not be tied up in bureaucracy and not wither because of their lack of connection to the original source? Somebody has suggested that we should develop what we can call *“a spirituality of charity”*, i.e. a search of all those theological and spiritual aspects that can and should be at the foundation of all our actions.

Pope Francis goes fast on this track and invites us to follow him. Pope Benedict too set a clear theological path in this direction by his encyclical letters *“Deus Caritas est”* (2005) and *“Charitas in Veritate”* (2009).

We, the children of Don Orione, must be the experts in charity so that all we do may be done to *“Restore things in Christ”*. This formation booklet wants to give a small contribution to this endeavour.

The reflection about charity is spread over 5 meetings which consider the fact that the Pope wants us to go to the outskirts of society. Then it goes on to analyse four possible objects of our love that means four places in which we should bring in our experience of God’s love. These are: a) myself (too often we forget that we too are

in need of a real experience of God's love which may fill our empty heart); b) our confrères (so that we may become a real team, the best tool in the hands of God); c) those suffering in their body; d) those suffering in their spirit.

Each of the meetings is prepared following the pattern we used last year, which all appreciated as simple and easy to use. Let us remember that the character of simplicity was chosen because we decided to present stimuli rather than solutions. The real work we do it in the daily life. This booklet presents only a theme on which we can concentrate in that particular period and some inspirational texts.

Each section will have a short introduction, three texts taken from Holy Scripture, the Magisterium and the Founder, and finally, some questions to provoke reflection. **It would be most suitable that each religious should read the texts and answer the questions before coming to the community meeting** and maybe write some notes on paper. We do not want to multiply meetings, but the work can be easily done during the spiritual reading in the days before the community meeting. On the day of the community meeting, then, after reading together the texts again, we can share the notes already prepared. Doing so we will avoid the embarrassing moments of silence in which everybody thinks "What should I say?" while waiting for somebody else to start. It is a small exercise of "communicatio in sacris" spiritual sharing. This is a fundamental aspect of our living together and has been requested more and more by the members of the Chapter. We learn to express our ideas with simplicity and honesty, while listening to the other confrères and appreciating what they say, knowing that in that moment they are expressing their actual situation. The whole family will benefit from this exercise and in it all members will feel part of the family.

The questions suggested may seem trivial. We made them as simple as possible so to help us to be as attached to the daily life as possible. Nothing is preventing us from adding more questions or insert topics which have been neglected by the texts. Let us remember also that the subjects of our reflection are the community and each

of its member, while the object is our renewal in the spirit of Pope Francis' teaching. This is the only important and necessary thing; the booklet is only an instrument of help.

Instaurare Omnia in Christo!

Fr. Oreste Ferrari
Vicar general

Part 1



The Pope wants us to go to the poor

Guide

Pope Francis tells us that in the poor we touch and serve the flesh of Christ and we grow in union with Him. Someone who hears these words from the lips of the Pope for the first time, understands that he is opening a new door within our spirituality. Not because the poor were not already in the founding nucleus of our charism, but because the Pope, with his words, has opened the doors to a new mysticism which is totally ours. The

Pope reminds us that in serving the poor, we grow in union with Christ and not the contrary...We have no right to “spiritualize” the message. The Pope does not make us start “from Christ” but from the



poor. Many say that Pope Francis is not bringing anything new.

Into the dual word Christ-poor, but we say, on the contrary, that we are convinced that the insistence and constant reminders of this Pope, are an up-dating of our charism, which can lead to a renewal of our works and consciences.

LET US ASK TOGETHER THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
enlighten our minds to perceive
the mysteries of the universe
in relation to eternity.
Spirit of right judgment and courage,
guide us and make us firm
in our baptismal decision
to follow Jesus' way of love.
Spirit of knowledge and reverence,
help us to see the lasting value
of justice and mercy in our
everyday dealings with one another.
May we respect life as we work
to solve problems of family and nation,
economy and ecology.
Spirit of God, spark our faith, hope and love
into new action each day.
Fill our lives with wonder and awe in your presence
which penetrates all creation. Amen



INSPIRATIONAL TEXTS

- **GOSPEL**

LK 10: 25-37

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself." And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my



neighbour?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay

you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

- **POPE**

Go to the outskirts!

“Each particular Church, as a portion of the Catholic Church under the leadership of its bishop, is likewise called to missionary conversion. It is the primary subject of evangelization, since it is the concrete manifestation of the one Church in one specific place, and in it “the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and operative”. It is the Church incarnate in a certain place, equipped with all the means of salvation bestowed by Christ, but with local features. Its joy in communicating Jesus Christ is expressed both by a concern to preach him to areas in greater need and in constantly going forth to the outskirts of its own territory or towards new sociocultural settings. Wherever the need for the light and the life of the Risen Christ is greatest, it will want to be there. To make this missionary impulse ever more focused, generous and fruitful, I encourage each particular Church to undertake a resolute process of discernment, purification and reform” (EG 30).

- **DON ORIONE**

Souls!Souls!

To see and love nothing in the world but the souls of our brothers.

The souls of little ones,

the souls of the poor,

the souls of sinners,

*the souls of the just,
the souls of the wayward,
the souls of the penitent,
the souls of those rebelling against the will of God,
the souls of those rebelling against the Holy Church of Christ,
the souls of degenerate children,
the souls of wicked and treacherous priests,
the souls of those who submit to sorrow,
souls white as doves,
the simple, pure and angelic souls of virgins,
souls that have fallen into the darkness of the senses
and into the degrading desires of the flesh,
souls that are proud in their evildoing,
souls that are greedy for power and gold,
souls full of themselves, seeing only themselves,
lost souls, seeking the way,
sorrowful souls seeking a refuge or a word of compassion,
souls crying in the desperation of judgment
or souls inebriated with the exultation of living the truth:
all of them are loved by Christ.
Christ died for all of them,
Christ wants them all safe
in His arms and in His wounded Heart.*

Our lives and the whole Congregation must be a canticle of unity and a sacrifice of universal brotherhood in Christ.

To see and hear Christ in every human being.

We must have the most profound and lofty music of charity in us.

For us the central point of the universe is the Church of Christ and the pivot of the Christian drama, the soul.

I hear only an infinite, divine symphony of spirits, fluttering all around the cross. And for us, drop by drop over the centuries, the cross pours out the divine blood that was shed for every human soul.

From the cross Christ cries: "I am thirsty!" A terrible cry of deep thirst that is not of the flesh, but rather the cry of thirst for souls, and it is through this thirst for our souls that Christ dies.

I see only a heaven, a heaven that is truly divine, because it is the heaven of salvation and true peace: I see only a kingdom of God, the kingdom of charity and forgiveness, where the whole multitude of peoples is the inheritance of Christ and the kingdom of Christ."

"Perfect joy can exist only in the perfect dedication of oneself to God and to mankind, to the most wretched as well as to the most physically and morally deformed, to those farthest away, to those most guilty, to those most hostile.

Place me, O Lord, at the mouth of hell, so that through Your mercy I may close it. May my secret martyrdom for the salvation of souls be my paradise and my supreme happiness.

*Love for souls, souls, souls! I will write my life story with blood and tears.
(25/2- 939)*

May the injustice of men not weaken my complete trust in the goodness of God.

I am nourished and guided by the breath of hopes that are immortal and revitalizing.

Our charity is a most sweet and foolish love of God and of mankind, one which is not of this world.

The charity of Christ has such sweetness and is so indescribable that the heart cannot imagine, nor speak, nor can the eye see, nor the ear hear.

Words always on fire.

Suffer, keep silent, pray, love, crucify oneself and adore.

The light and the peace of the heart.

I will climb my Calvary like a meek lamb.

Apostolate and martyrdom: martyrdom and apostolate.

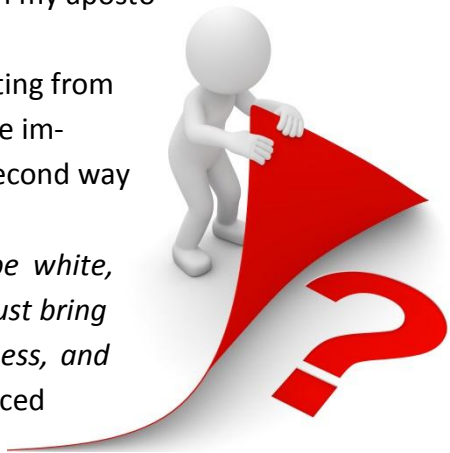
Our souls and our words must be clear, chaste, almost like those of babies, and must bring to everyone a breath of faith, of goodness and of comfort which will carry them up to heaven.

Let us keep our eyes and hearts rooted in divine goodness."

Build up Christ, build up always! "Petra autem est Christus".

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- Are the poor an essential part of my vocation?
- Which poor people do I meet in my apostolate?
- Is starting from Christ and starting from the poor the same thing? Is the importance of emphasizing the second way clear to me?
- *"Our souls and words must be white, chaste, almost infantile and must bring a fresh breeze of faith, goodness, and comfort to all".* Are we convinced of this?



COMMUNITY SHARING

It is a good idea that after the sharing, all choose a common resolution or set a goal to be achieved before the next meeting, as a sign of their commitment to renewal.



Guide

Let us conclude our meeting with a prayer:

To Mary, Mother of the Church

Help us to look at the world with affection and bold faith.

Holy Virgin, guided by the Spirit, “you moved quickly to reach a town of Judah” (Lk 1:39), where Elizabeth lived, and thus you became the first missionary of the Gospel. Help us, urged on by the same Spirit, to have the courage to enter into the town to announce freedom and hope, to share with it the daily labour, in search of the common good.

Give us today the courage not to distance ourselves, not to avoid places of chaos and confusion, and to offer equal service to all and look with affection upon this world in which only that which is genuinely human touches our hearts.

Help us to look with affection upon the world and to love it. We priests experience the summit of our priestly presence on Holy Thursday, when the oils of the catechumens of the sick and of crism are put into our hands.

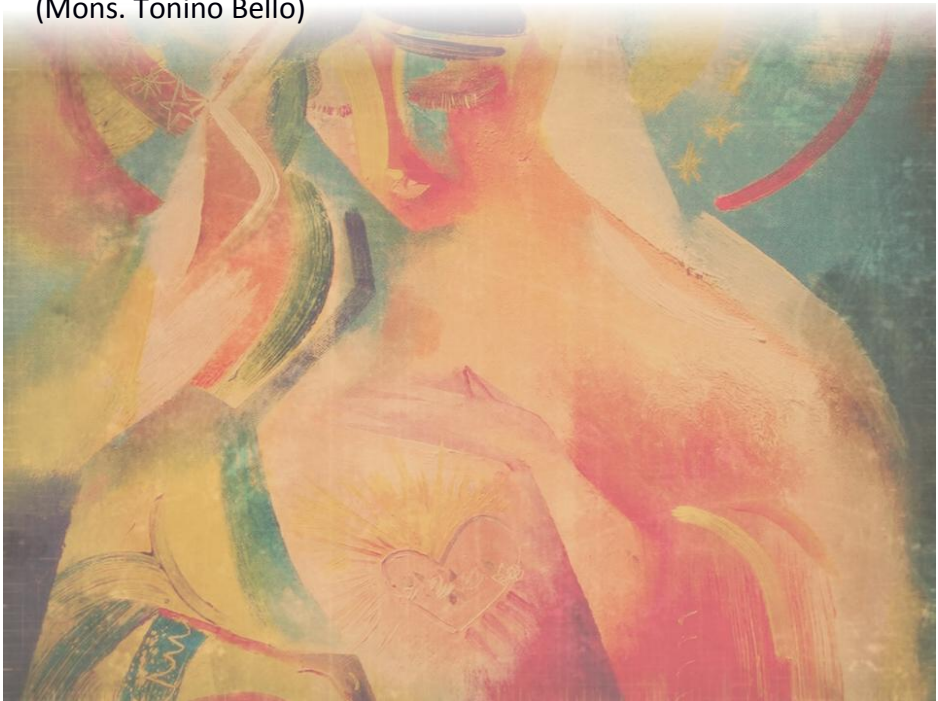
Enable the oil of the sick, in our hands, to mean a preferential choice of the sick city, which suffers because of its own weakness and because of the evil of others.

Enable the oil of catechumens, the oil of the strong and fighters, in our hands, to express solidarity with whoever is struggling for bread, house and work. Solidarity to translate into courageous choices on-the-go, a commitment not to embalm and lock in our sterile feelings.

Enable the sacred chrism to show to all those who are humiliated and the hurt ones of our city, but also the indifferent, the distracted and sinners their incredible priestly, prophetic and royal dignity.

Enable us to enter into the city like you Holy Virgin, priest, prophet and kings. Amen

(Mons. Tonino Bello)





I too am poor because continuously in need of God and of my brothers

Guide

“The first charity we must do to ourselves” Don Orione used to say, and by this he meant our need to meet God. Today’s section asks us to look at little at ourselves with calmness to be aware of our “gifts” and our “weaknesses”. It is very easy to look at others and see their weaknesses or errors. But it is more difficult to look at ourselves. Moreover, Jesus began his apostolate preaching conversion. We need God, we need our brothers and sisters. Only when we open ourselves with humility and readiness to meeting them we discover the true value of life and the beauty of ourselves. The essential dimension of this conversion is through meeting, a word very dear to Pope Francis. It is an enriching aspect which often opens the way to reconciliation. Nothing is more contrary to the Gospel than arrogance and pride which create in man closure and distance. Let us empty ourselves of ourselves and go out of ourselves and meet others.

LET US ASK TOGETHER THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Holy Spirit of light and love,
you are the substantial love
of the Father and the Son;
hear my prayer.

Bounteous bestower of most precious gifts,
grant me a strong and living faith
which makes me accept
all revealed truths
and shape my conduct
in accord with them.

Give me a most confident hope
in all divine promises which
prompts me to abandon myself
unreservedly to you and your guidance.

Infuse into me a love of perfect goodwill,
and act according to God's least desires.

Make me love not only my friends
but my enemies as well,
in imitation of Jesus Christ
who through you offered himself
on the Cross for all people.

Holy Spirit, animate, inspire, and guide me,
and help me to be always a true follower of you.
Amen.

INSPIRATIONAL TEXTS

- **GOSPEL** *Lk 21:1-4*

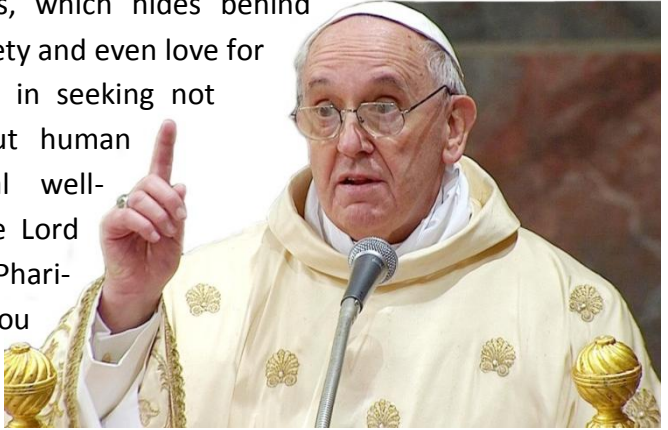
He looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; he also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. He said,

"Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on."

- POPE

Spiritual worldliness and self-centredness

"Spiritual worldliness, which hides behind the appearance of piety and even love for the Church, consists in seeking not the Lord's glory but human glory and personal well-being. It is what the Lord reprimanded the Pharisees for: "How can you believe, who receive



glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?" (*Jn* 5:44). It is a subtle way of seeking one's "own interests, not those of Jesus Christ" (*Phil* 2:21). It takes on many forms, depending on the kinds of persons and groups into which it seeps. Since it is based on carefully cultivated appearances, it is not always linked to outward sin; from without, everything appears as it should be. But if it were to seep into the Church, "it would be infinitely more disastrous than any other worldliness which is simply moral'" (EG 93).

"This way of thinking also feeds the vainglory of those who are content to have a modicum of power and would rather be the general of a defeated army than a mere private in a unit which continues to fight. How often we dream up vast apostolic projects, meticulously planned, just like defeated generals! But this is to deny our history as a Church,

which is glorious precisely because it is a history of sacrifice, of hopes and daily struggles, of lives spent in service and fidelity to work, tiring as it may be, for all work is “the sweat of our brow”. Instead, we waste time talking about “what needs to be done” – in Spanish we call this the sin of “habriaqueísmo” – like spiritual masters and pastoral experts who give instructions from on high. We indulge in endless fantasies and we lose contact with the real lives and difficulties of our people.” (EG 96).

- **DON ORIONE**

“Discouragement makes us feel our poverty and makes us realize that in fact we need God, and that for this reason even discouragement can be good for us, but only insofar as it makes us feel that the source of strength is God...We are all in the hands of the Lord. We want to love and serve the Lord and that his will may be accomplished in us, supported and entrusted to his grace on our knees at the feet of Holy Mary, our great and consoling Mother, but also and always at the feet of Holy Church, Mother of our faith and of our souls. What are we afraid of? The Lord is always near us and to those who love....

My Sons, the Lord is near, near to all who love Him, who desire to love Him. He is near and keeps in mind all your moral and physical sorrows. He puts all your sufferings into the motherly hands of Our Blessed Lady, who takes away your defects, the slag of your weaknesses, your failures, and then offers them again, your pains, to Jesus, in reparation for us and our brothers and sisters, for the salvation of thousands and thousands of souls, every day, every hour, and for all the souls which are suffering and atoning here on earth, in the second kingdom, wanting to throw themselves on the Heart of Our Lord.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- Am I able to recognise my weak points?
- In my apostolate am I bossy or am I a humble servant?
- What can I do to purify myself?
- What must I detach myself from in order to allow myself to be moulded?
- Do we feel that the Lord is close in times of trial, discouragement and loneliness?



COMMUNITY SHARING

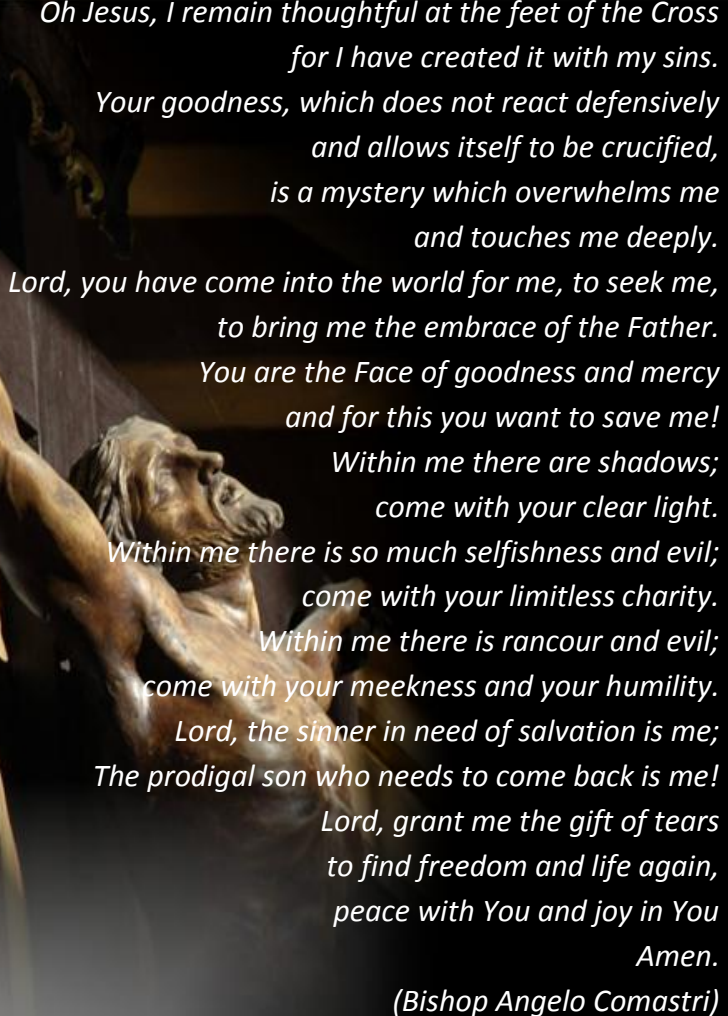
It is a good idea that after the sharing, all choose a common resolution or set a goal to be achieved before the next meeting, as a sign of their commitment to renewal.



Part 2

Guide

Let us conclude our meeting with a prayer:



*Oh Jesus, I remain thoughtful at the feet of the Cross
for I have created it with my sins.
Your goodness, which does not react defensively
and allows itself to be crucified,
is a mystery which overwhelms me
and touches me deeply.
Lord, you have come into the world for me, to seek me,
to bring me the embrace of the Father.
You are the Face of goodness and mercy
and for this you want to save me!
Within me there are shadows;
come with your clear light.
Within me there is so much selfishness and evil;
come with your limitless charity.
Within me there is rancour and evil;
come with your meekness and your humility.
Lord, the sinner in need of salvation is me;
The prodigal son who needs to come back is me!
Lord, grant me the gift of tears
to find freedom and life again,
peace with You and joy in You
Amen.
(Bishop Angelo Comastri)*

Part 3



My brothers in the community: family spirit and solidarity

Guide

How much we have said and how much we shall continue to say about the importance of community and even that will never be enough. The love which we live in family has a very special importance for it underlines an aspect of ourselves (the sense of belonging) which is necessary in order to navigate the often stormy waters of our apostolate. Don Orione used to put a lot of emphasis on family spirit. What attitude can help us to build this spirit? Feeling that we are truly sons of one Father, sharing the same Mission, practicing together the Commandment of love. We religious of Don Orione must embrace the “family spirit” in a very special way because “they recognize us for the way we love one another”.

Part 3

LET US ASK TOGETHER THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

O Holy Spirit,

Jesus asked the Father to give me the Spirit of Truth (John 14:17).

Help me to recognize You in the scriptures.

Open my mind to understand Your truths,
and open my heart to accept Your truths
in faith even before I gain right understanding.

O Holy Spirit, Jesus said,

“The one who receives
the seed that falls on good soil
hears the word and understands it.
He produces an abundant crop” (Matt. 13:23).

Be the gardener of my life.

Nourish the seeds of heaven
that You have already placed within me
and make it grow so that Your love,
Your ways, and Your kingdom
will always grow within me
and produce much good fruit for others.

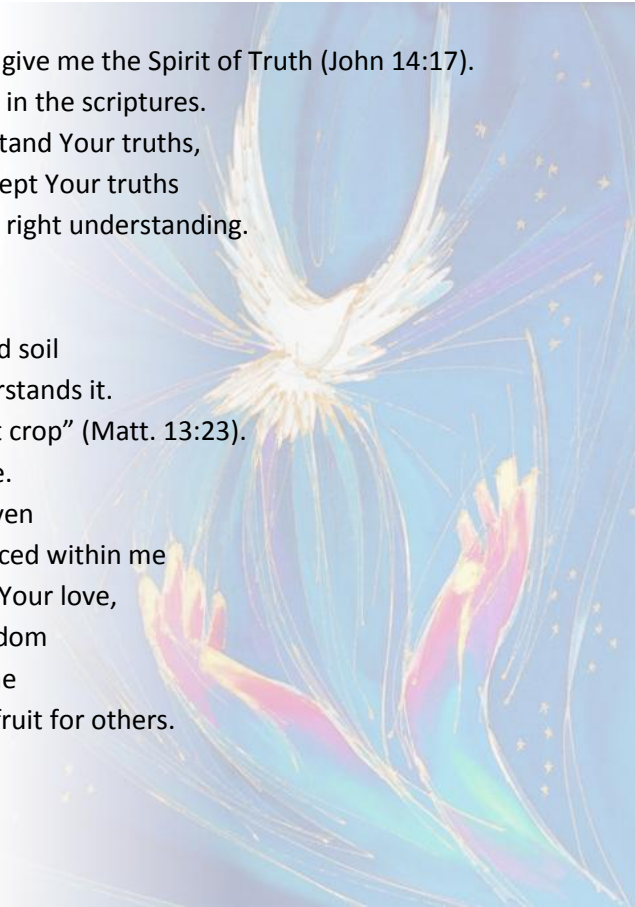
Amen.

INSPIRATIONAL TEXTS

- **GOSPEL**

Jn 15: 12-17

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the mas-



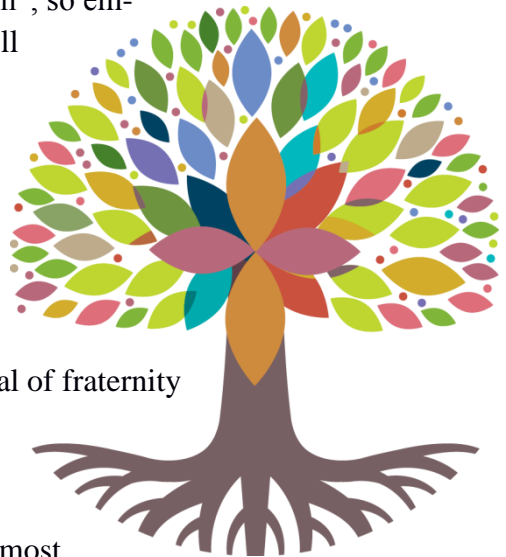
ter is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

- **POPE**

People of communion

[...] Men and women religious, like all other consecrated persons, have been called, as I mentioned, “experts in communion”. So I am hoping that the “spirituality of communion”, so emphasized by Saint John Paul II, will become a reality and that you will be in the forefront of responding to “the great challenge facing us” in this new millennium: “to make the Church the home and the school of communion.” I am sure that in this Year you will make every effort to make the ideal of fraternity pursued by your founders and foundresses expand everywhere, like concentric circles.

Communion is lived first and foremost within the respective communities of each Institute. To this end, I would ask you to think about my frequent comments about criticism, gossip, envy, jealousy, hostility as ways of acting which have no place in our houses. This being the case, the path of charity open before us is almost infinite, since it entails mutual acceptance and concern, practicing a



communion of goods both material and spiritual, fraternal correction and respect for those who are weak ... it is the “mystique of living together” which makes our life “a sacred pilgrimage” We need to ask ourselves about the way we relate to persons from different cultures, as our communities become increasingly international. How can we enable each member to say freely what he or she thinks, to be accepted with his or her particular gifts, and to become fully co-responsible? [...] » (*Apostolic Letter of Pope Francis to all consecrated men and women in occasion of the Year of Consecrated life*).

- **DON ORIONE**

«It is true that you give me good news about produce such as beans and rice, and you tell me about channels of water and machines etc., but what is the use of all this, my son, if there is not union and charity amongst you and if one has gone to one place and another wants to go somewhere else? In the letter of last Sunday did not the Apostle Paul say that even if you can move mountains, but you do not have charity, you have nothing? And if you speak all languages and give away all your belongings, but if you lack charity, you have nothing? I say to you in Jesus Christ, “Are you united in the charity of the Lord?” If you are, the Lord will bless you and you will become holy and be Sons of Divine Providence. But if this spirit of humble and sweet charity and work for souls, in peace and harmony of hearts and of the holy vocation is not amongst you, what are you expecting to build? What fruits of eternal life can ever be produced by thorns of discord? How can you expect to be Apostles of faith and peace and love of God, if there is no peace amongst you, and the charity of Jesus Christ is not amongst you?»

Part 3

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION



- What acts of love can I do to make my community “more family”?
- Am I able to cooperate with all my confreres and to respect them?
- Am I a person of unity who knows how to bring people together?

• Do these things (*It is true that you give me good news about produce such as beans and rice, and you tell me about channels of water and machines etc., but what is the use of all this, my son, if there is not union and charity amongst you and if one has gone to one place and another wants to go somewhere else?*) still happen? And if they still happen, is it possible to recognise them and do a U-turn?

COMMUNITY SHARING

It is a good idea that after the sharing, all choose a common resolution or set a goal to be achieved before the next meeting, as a sign of their commitment to renewal.



Part 3

Guide

Let us conclude our meeting with a prayer:

*Lord God, we praise you and glorify you
for the beauty of this gift which we call dialogue.*

*It is beloved "son" of God because it is similar to the alternating current
which flows incessantly in the bosom of the Holy Trinity.*

*Dialogue unites, knows, removes suspicion, opens doors,
Resolves conflicts, makes people grow.*

It is a bond of unity and source of fraternity.

*Oh Lord Jesus, when tension appears, give me the humility necessary
not to want to impose my truth in opposition to that of my brother,
enable me to keep quiet at the right moment
and wait until he has finished expressing his thought.*

*Give me the wisdom to understand that no human being
is able to possess all truth absolutely,
and that there is nothing which is error or eccentricity in my eyes
which does not have some element of truth in it.*

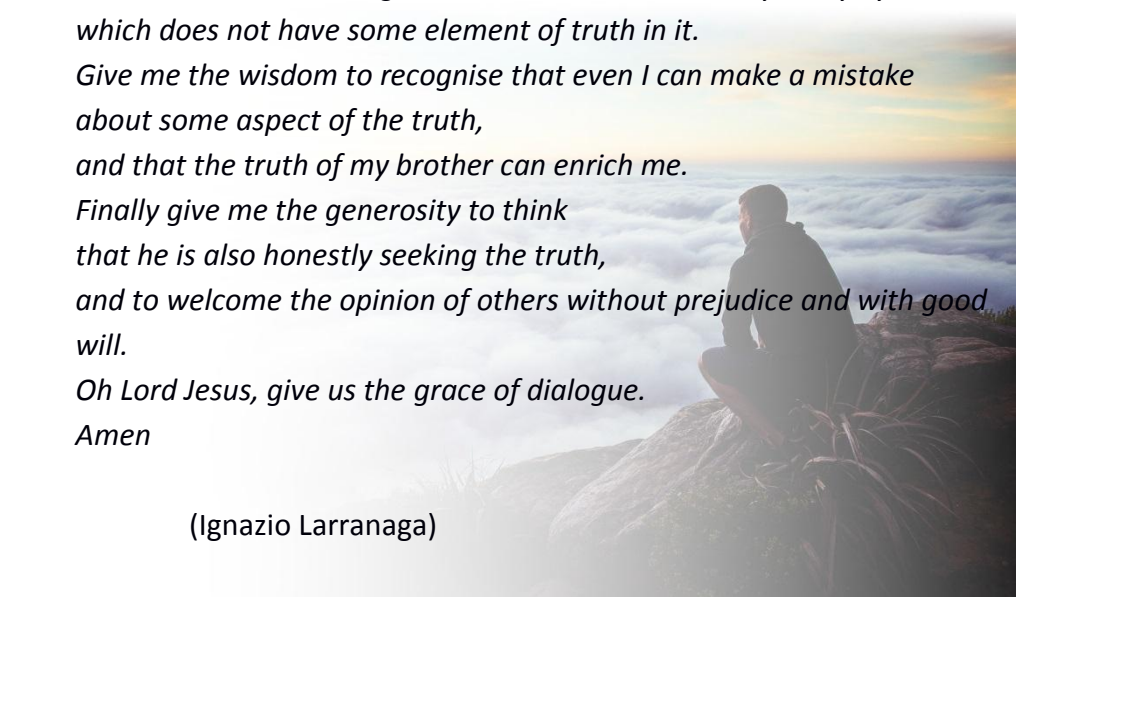
*Give me the wisdom to recognise that even I can make a mistake
about some aspect of the truth,
and that the truth of my brother can enrich me.*

*Finally give me the generosity to think
that he is also honestly seeking the truth,
and to welcome the opinion of others without prejudice and with good
will.*

Oh Lord Jesus, give us the grace of dialogue.

Amen

(Ignazio Larranaga)





Those suffering in their body: meeting the sick and the outcast...

Guide

Loving all and loving each person in the fullness of his or her being, body and spirit. In this part we want to analyse the corporal aspect. We live in a world surrounded by poverty. We are in daily contact with people whose future is challenged by sickness, destitution in fact by an emergency which seems to be becoming systematic.

As religious we are asking ourselves about our behaviour which is in ever greater need of direct contact with the “wounded flesh of Christ”. *Charity*, Don Orione reminds us, is hungry for action: *it is an activity that is in touch with the eternal and divine*. The question that we carry inside us is about our real presence among the poor. It is not about “the poor in spirit”, but those who are without things, relationships, affection and other things and Jesus reminds us that the destitute will always be with us and this “prediction” is confirmed by 2000 years of history. But history also confirms that many, many people have become “Good Samaritans” and let us make that lesson ours too.

Part 4

LET US ASK TOGETHER THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

O Holy Spirit,

Jesus said that

He would not leave us orphans,
but would send You to us (John 14:18).

How often I have wept or complained
because it seemed like

You were not with me
in my sorrows and sufferings!

Help me to recognize Your presence
in ALL situations.

Help me to turn to You and find You,
for You never leave me
nor abandon me.

You care even more about me
and my problems than I do.

You are working a plan for my benefit,
to make good come from everything
that happens to me.

Help me to discover Your presence
in every moment of my life.

Amen.

INSPIRATIONAL TEXTS

- **GOSPEL**

Jn 5:1-9

After this there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in He-

brew Bethzatha, which has five porticoes. In these lay many invalids blind, lame, and paralyzed. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be made well?" The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me." Jesus said to him, "Stand up, take your mat and walk." At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk. Now that day was a sabbath.

- **POPE**

Attentiveness which considers the other.

"Our commitment does not consist exclusively in activities or programmes of promotion and assistance; what the Holy Spirit mobilizes is not an unruly activism, but above all an attentiveness which considers the other "in a certain sense as one with ourselves". This loving attentiveness is the beginning of a true concern for their person which inspires me effectively to seek their good. This entails appreciating the poor in their goodness, in their experience of life, in their culture, and in their ways of living the faith. True love is always contemplative, and permits us to serve the other not out of necessity or vanity, but rather because he or she is beautiful above and beyond mere appearances: "The love by which we find the other pleasing leads us to offer him something freely". The poor person, when loved, "is esteemed as of great value", and this is what makes the authentic option for the poor differ from any other ideology, from any attempt to exploit the poor for one's own personal or political interest. Only on the



basis of this real and sincere closeness can we properly accompany the poor on their path of liberation. Only this will ensure that “in every Christian community the poor feel at home. Would not this approach be the greatest and most effective presentation of the good news of the kingdom?” Without the preferential option for the poor, “the proclamation of the Gospel, which is itself the prime form of charity, risks being misunderstood or submerged by the ocean of words which daily engulfs us in today’s society of mass communications” (EG 199).

- **DON ORIONE**

«In this intoxicating light I divest myself of the old man and I love and this makes me a new man and loving, I sing, I sing! I love without speech and I sing the sing infinite Love itself and our Blessed Lady of Divine Love and I hurl myself to a height without measure, from where I make a great cry of victory and glory to God and the Blessed Virgin, I love and I sing. Making the pathways luminous with God; becoming a good man among my brothers and sisters; bending down and reaching out with hand and heart to gather the dangerous weaknesses and poverty and place them on the on the altar, so that in God they may become the strength of God and the greatness of God. Jesus died with his arms open. Charity! I want to sing Charity! Having great charity for all! Lord, write on my forehead and on my heart the sacred Tau of charity. Open my eyes and my heart on the sufferings of my brothers and sisters. Charity is hungry for action. It is an activity which touches the eternal and the divine. Charity cannot be lazy». (*From a writing of 31.8.1931; Don Orione nella luce di Maria, 2164-2165*)

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- Is our community open to the poor?
- Does it take care also of those who are “not institutional”? (People who do not reside permanently within our structures). When was the last time I allowed a poor person to disturb me?
- Am I really a good man among my brothers and sisters?



COMMUNITY SHARING

It is a good idea that after the sharing, all choose a common resolution or set a goal to be achieved before the next meeting, as a sign of their commitment to renewal.



Guide

Let us conclude our meeting with a prayer:

This evening, Oh Lord, I am afraid.

I am afraid because your Gospel is terrible.

It is easy to listen to but it is very difficult to live it.

I am afraid of making a mistake, Oh Lord.

I am afraid of being satisfied with my nice little life;

*I am afraid of what I give, that it hides from me what I don't give.
I am afraid, Oh Lord, because there poorer people than me,
less educated than me, less developed
with less accommodation, less heating, less pay
less nourished, with less affection, less loved.*

*I am afraid, Oh Lord, because I do not do enough for them.
I do not do give everything for them. I should give everything, to the
point of wiping out every suffering, every misery, every sin from the
World.*

*So, Oh Lord, I should give everything, all my time.
I should give my life.*

*Yet it is not true, Lord, it is not true for everyone, I am exaggerating, I
need to be reasonable.*

*My Son, is there is just one commandment for all:
"You will love with ALL your heart,
ALL your soul,
with ALL your strength".*

(Michel Quoist)

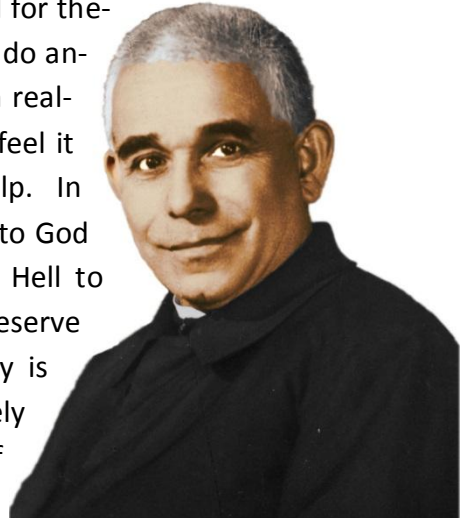




Those who suffer in their spirit: Meeting the sinners

Guide

The poor are not only those who are physically so; there is a multitude of people who suffer spiritually, and for these people public institutions cannot do anything. Some of them do not even realize that they are suffering, or they feel it but do not know where to seek help. In Don Orione there is a cry, a prayer to God to allow him to go to the gate of Hell to block the road to those souls who deserve to go in. For our Founder this cry is transformed into a way of life. Surely we feel proud of having a model of this greatness, a father capable of



thinking of caring about the eternal life of his own sons. The first duty of a priest is to be a bridge between the human and the divine, a bridge on which pass pure souls, and also sinful souls, as Don Orione reminds us.

Thus our responsibility is truly great!

LET US ASK TOGETHER THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

O Holy Spirit,

I have my own expectations
about what I should
and should not do.

I now surrender to You my ideas,
my limitations, my preferences,
and my goals.

Fill me, Holy Spirit,

with all Your supernatural gifts!

Empower me to accept and grow
in the supernatural life
as much as the early disciples did.

I want to be useful to You.

I want to go where You lead me.

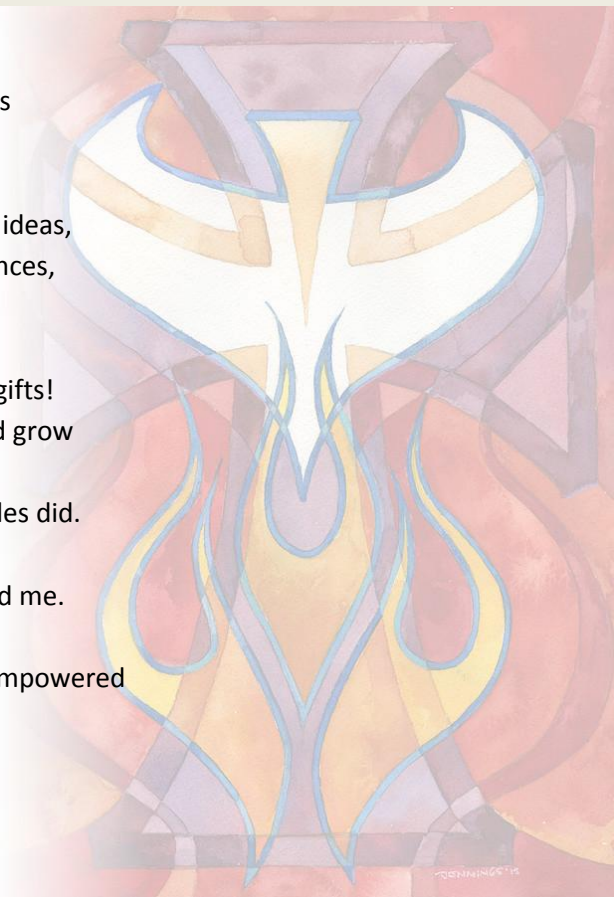
Holy Spirit,

send me forth gifted and empowered

to make a difference

spreading the Good News

of God's forgiving love.



Part 5

INSPIRATIONAL TEXTS

- **GOSPEL** **Jn 8:1-11**

While Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone



among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman,

where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."

- **POPE**

Misericordia et misera

"A woman and Jesus meet. She is an adulteress and, in the eyes of the Law, liable to be stoned. Jesus, through his preaching and the total gift of himself

that would lead him to the Cross, returned the Mosaic Law to its true and original intent. Here what is central is not the law or legal justice, but the love of God, which is capable of looking into the heart of each person and seeing the deepest desire hidden there; God's love must take primacy over all else. This Gospel account, however, is not an encounter of sin and judgement in the abstract, but of a sinner and her Saviour. Jesus looked that woman in the eye and read in her heart a desire to be understood, forgiven and set free. The misery of sin was clothed with the mercy of love. Jesus' only judgement is one filled with mercy and compassion for the condition of this sinner. To those who wished to judge and condemn her to death, Jesus replies with a lengthy silence. His purpose was to let God's voice be heard in the consciences not only of the woman, but also in those of her accusers, who drop their stones and one by one leave the scene (cf. *Jn* 8:9). Jesus then says: "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?... Neither do I condemn you. Go your way and from now on do not sin again" (vv. 10-11). Jesus helps the woman to look to the future with hope and to make a new start in life. Henceforth, if she so desires, she can "walk in charity" (*Eph* 5:2). Once clothed in mercy, even if the inclination to sin remains, it is overcome by the love that makes it possible for her to look ahead and to live her life differently. (*Apostolic Letter Misericordia et misera of Pope Francis at the conclusion of the extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy*).

- **DON ORIONE**

«The aim of the priesthood is to save souls and to go after, especially, those who are separating themselves from God and who are going to be lost. To them I must show preference, not of tenderness, but of paternal comfort and help for their return, leaving, if necessary, the other souls less in need of help. Jesus did not come for the just but for sinners. Preserve me, then, Oh my God, from the fatal illusion, the diabolical deception, that I, as a priest, should concern myself only with those who come to church and the sacraments, with faithful souls and pious

women. Certainly, my ministry would be easier, more attractive, but I would not be living that spirit of apostolic charity towards the lost sheep, which shines through the whole Gospel. Only when I am worn out and three times dead for having run after sinners, only then will I be able to seek some rest among the just. May I never forget that the ministry entrusted to me is a ministry of mercy, and have with my brothers and sisters who are sinners, a little of that untiring charity, which you have shown to my soul, Oh great God».

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION



- How much time do we dedicate to confessions and listening to people?
- What sort of people do I find it difficult to love and forgive?
- *The ministry entrusted to me is a ministry of mercy. We have just celebrated a Holy Year which has had mercy as its symbol and it is easy to ask ourselves what has been its effect on us and what vision do we have of forgiveness?*

• COMMUNITY SHARING

It is a good idea that after the sharing, all choose a common resolution or set a goal to be achieved before the next meeting, as a sign of their commitment to renewal.



Guide

Let us conclude our meeting with a prayer:

I know you fully – I know all about you. I have counted all the hairs on your head. In My eyes nothing in your life is unimportant; I have been following you all these past years, and I have always loved you - even when you have gone astray. I know your every problem. I know all your needs and worries. Of course, I know all your sins. But I want to tell you again that I love you – not for what you have done or have not done – I love you for your own sake, for your beauty and the dignity that My Father has given you by creating you in His image. It is a dignity that you have often forgotten, a beauty which you have clouded with sin. But I still love you as you are, and I have poured out My Blood to win you back. If only you will ask Me with faith for My grace which will reach everything in your life that needs to change; and I will give you the strength to free yourself from sin and from its destructive power.

I know what is in your heart – I know your solitude and all your wounds – rejection, judgements and humiliations. I have carried all that on my shoulders before you. I personally carried all that for you, so that you might share My strength and My victory. I know above all your need for love - I know how much you thirst to be loved and to be loved with affection. But how many times you have thirsted in vain, searching for that love selfishly, forcing yourself to fill that interior emptiness with short-lived pleasures – with an even greater emptiness of sin... Are you thirsty for love? “Let he who thirsts come to me and drink” (Jn 7: 37). I will give you enough drink to satisfy you. Do you thirst to be loved with affection? I love you tenderly more that you can imagine – to the point of dying for you on the cross. I have thirsted for you. Yes, this is the only way of beginning to show you My love for you: I AM THIRSTING FOR

YOU. I thirst to love you and be loved by you – this tells you how precious you are to Me. I AM THIRSTING FOR YOU. Come to Me, and I will fill your heart and heal your wounds. I will make you into a new creature and I will give you peace, even in the midst of all your trials. I AM THIRSTING FOR YOU. You must never doubt My mercy, never doubt that I accept you, that I desire to forgive you, bless you and live My life in you. I AM THIRSTING FOR YOU. If you feel unimportant in the eyes of the world, it does not matter at all. For Me there is no one in the whole world more important than you. I AM THIRSTING FOR YOU.



APPENDIX

Discourse of the Holy Father, Francis, during the meeting with priests, consecrated people and seminarians on the occasion of his pastoral visit to Genoa, 27th May 2017.

[...] «The more we imitate the style of Jesus, the more we shall do our work of pastors well. This is the fundamental value, the *style* of Jesus. What was the style of Jesus as a pastor? Jesus was always on the move. The Gospels, each with their own emphases, always shows us Jesus on the move, in the midst of people, the “crowd”, as the Gospel puts it. The Gospel clearly distinguishes the disciples, the crowd, the Doctors of the law, the Sadducees, the Pharisees.....The Gospel makes distinctions: it is interesting. But Jesus stood in the middle of the crowd. If we think about the daily timetable of Jesus, reading the Gospels we can say that the greater part of his time he spent walking along the road. This means closeness to the people, closeness to problems. He did not hide himself. Then, in the evening, many times he did hide himself in order to pray, to be with the Father.

These two things, this way of seeing Jesus, in the street and in prayer, helps us in our daily life, which is not in the street but *in a hurry*. These are different things. It is said about Jesus that perhaps he was in a bit of a hurry when he was going towards his Passion: “he went “resolutely” to Jerusalem.

But this habit, this “crazy” way of living always with an eye of the watch, “I must do this, this, this,...” this is not a pastoral way of doing things, Jesus did not do this.

Jesus was never still. Moreover, just as all those who are on the move, Jesus was exposed to dispersion, to be “fragmented”. I like this question because it is clear that it comes from a man who is *on the move* and not static. We should not be afraid of movement and of the scattered nature of our time.

But the greatest fear we must consider and imagine is a *static* life, the life of a priest who has solved everything, everything in order, structured, everything in its place, timetables, the time for opening the office, the church and for closing...I am afraid of the static priest. I fear that.

Even when he is static in prayer: I pray from this time to this time. But don't you feel the need to go and spend time with the Lord an hour longer to look at him and let him look at you? This is the question that I put to the *static* priest, who has everything perfect, organized...I would say that a life like that, so structured, is not a Christian life. Perhaps that parish priest is a good entrepreneur, but I wonder: is he Christian? Or at least does he live like a Christian? Yes, he celebrates Mass, but is his style Christian? Or perhaps he is a believer, a good man, living in the grace of God, but with the style of a businessman. Jesus has always been a man of the street, a man on the move, a man open to the surprises of God. On the contrary, the priest that has everything planned, everything structured, is generally closed to the surprises of God and loses that joy of the surprise meeting. The Lord grabs you when you don't expect it, but he is open to that. So a first guideline is *don't be afraid of this tension* which touches our lives. We are in the street, the world is like that. It is a sign of life, of vitality: a dad a mum, a teacher is always exposed to that and lives in tension. A heart that loves, that gives itself, will always live like that: exposed to tension. Someone may have the daring to say, "I will become a priest in a monastery, an enclosed sister, and so I will not have this tension". But even the Fathers of the desert went into the desert to *struggle* more. That conflict, that tension.

I believe that we must think about some other aspects of this. If we look at Jesus, the Gospel show us two moments, which are strong, which are the foundation. I said this at the beginning and I repeat it again: *meeting with the Father and meeting with people*. The majority of people Jesus met were people in need, sick, possessed by devils, sinners, also marginalized and lepers. Then the meeting with the Father. In the meeting with the Father and with our brothers and sisters, there is tension: all must be lived in this context of

meeting. You, as a priest, meet God, the Father, Jesus in the Eucharist, and the faithful: you meet. There is no wall that prevents the meeting. There is no great rigid formality which prevents the meeting. For example, in *prayer*, you can stay for an hour before the Tabernacle, but without meeting the Lord, praying like a parrot. But you waste time like that! Prayer: if you pray, pray and meet the Lord, remain in silence, letting the Lord look at you. Say a word to the Lord, ask something. Be silent, listen to what he is saying, what he is telling you...*that's meeting*. It's the same with people. We priests know how people suffer when they come to ask advice or for anything. "What is the problem?...Yes, yes, but now I don't have time, no..." Rushing, not on the move, rushing, that is the difference. What is still and what is in a rush never meet. I knew a good priest who was very friendly. He had been a professor of literature and a high, the highest level because he was a poet and knew literature very well. When he retired, he is a religious, he asked his provincial to send him in a parish in the slums, with the poorest of the poor. This man of great culture went there to do this service, truly with the desire, and he was a man of prayer, to continue to meet Jesus and meet people that he did not know, poor people. He went with great generosity. This man belonged to the community where I was, a religious community. The provincial had told him, "Once a week go to the community". He came often, spoke to everyone, went to confession, renewed he went back. One day he said to me, "These theologians.... are missing something". I said to him, "what are they missing?" "For example, the professor of ecclesiology, must give two new teachings". "Yes, what?" He said this: "The people of God, the people of the parish, are ontologically *tiring*, that is, they make you tired, and, metaphysically, they are in essence, *Olympic*. What does "*Olympic*" mean? That they do what they want. You can give advice, but then we have to wait and see...So when you work with people, they exhaust you, and even make you feel rather fed up. But they are the People of God! Think about Jesus, and how they all kept making demands on him. What about when Jesus was in the street and said, "Who has touched me?" "But Master what do you mean? Look how many people are pressing against you". "Someone has touched me". "But

look..." People make you tired. Let people make us tired. Don't protect your tranquility too much. I go to the confessional. There is a queue, and then the thought comes to leave...Not Mass, but something what could be done or not done, see, I had this in mind, I look at my watch and what do I do? There is a choice – I remain in the confessional and continue to hear confessions until the end, or I say to the people, "I have another commitment, I am sorry, I must leave". Always meet people. But this meeting people is such a penance, it's a cross! Meeting people is a cross, because perhaps there are in the parish, one, two or ten people, old ladies, that make you a cake or who bring you good...But how many dramatic situations you must see! This truly tires the soul and leads you to pray and intercede. Let me say two things, in this situation of tension. It is very important. It is one of the signs that things are not going well when a priest speaks too much about himself, of what he does, what he likes to do...he is self-seeking. It is a sign that that man is not a man of meeting, rather he is a mirror man, who like to look at himself in the mirror, to reflect himself. He needs to fill the emptiness of his heart by speaking about himself. On the contrary, the priest who lives a life of meeting the Lord in prayer and the people up to the end of the day, is "torn to pieces", St Luigi Orione used to say, "like an old rag". Such that he can say, "But Lord, I need something else..." Are you tired? Keep going. That tiredness is holiness, as long as there is also prayer. In contrast, there can also be a tiredness of self-seeking. So, you priests, must examine yourselves on this: am I a man of meeting? Am I a man of the tabernacle? Am I a man of the street? Am I a man "with an ear", who is ready to listen? Oh when the start telling me things, I reply immediately, "Yes, yes, things are like that..." Do I let myself be exhausted by people? That was Jesus. There are no formulas. Jesus had a clear awareness that his life was for others, for the Father and for people, not for himself. He gave himself, he gave himself, gave himself to the people, and gave himself to the Father in prayer. He lived his life as a mission: "I have been sent by the Father to say these things..." One thing which does not help us is weakness in the diocesan clergy. But I will speak about this in answer to another question. It is good, good for all priests to remember that only Jesus

is the Saviour, there are no other saviours. Also to think that Jesus, never, never, was tied to structures, but always tied to relationships. If a priest sees that in his life his behaviour is too tied to structures, something is not working. Jesus did not do this, Jesus was tied to relationships. Once I heard a man of God, and I believe that they will introduce the cause of his beatification, say, "In the Church we must live this saying, "a minimum of structures for a maximum of life and never a maximum of structures for a minimum of life". For without relationships with God and with our neighbour, there is no meaning in the life of a priest. You can make career, you can go to that place, or that other one, in that parish which you like or in a list of candidates to become bishop. You can make a career. But what about your heart? It will remain empty, because your heart is attached to structures and not to relationships, essential relationships – with the Father, with God, with Jesus, and with people. This is more or less the reply based on the values which I want to share with you. "But Father, you are not modern...These guidelines are old-fashioned..." Life is like that my son! It is the old values of the Church which are modern, ultramodern!" [...]

«Il prete che conduce una vita di incontro, con il Signore nella preghiera e con la gente fino alla fine della giornata, è “strappato”, san Luigi Orione diceva “come uno straccio”. E uno può dire: “Ma, Signore, ho bisogno di altre cose...”. Stai stanco? Vai avanti».

(Papa Francesco)

