

As Orionine, what contributions in this emergency situation

Don Orione inspires us to live this time of health and social emergency with seriousness, in full respect of the norms and public indications, but also with the imagination of charity: ***"Burn and shine with charity!"*** Therefore, it is time to make charity triumph with simple and small gestures that are magnified as a sign of effective solidarity, spiritual closeness, support for the poorest and promotion of good.

In the midst of many sad and worrying news it is good to receive "crumbs" of good. I will tell you some of them: A priest, the only "close relative", who blesses a coffin without missing the prayer of the Church. A doctor, with all his diplomas, who sets out to do the simplest service like that of feeding an elderly resident. An employee who, in the impossibility of the presence of the priest (all in compulsory isolation), "blesses" the coffins by placing a little picture of Saint Louis Orione on them. A parish priest who, in the morning, makes the round of phone calls among his parishioners, trying to reach the isolated elderly people in particular. Many lay people who "meet" in the media to pray and support each other. The Community of the Shrine of Tortona, in quarantine, praying before the Founder's urn. Volunteers who, despite the danger, continue to prepare and distribute meals to the homeless. The seminarians and religious of Córdoba who take turns to replace a part of the staff to assist the residents of Cottolengo. The clerics of Theology who continue to serve in the "Vatican showers" to help the homeless.

These are attitudes of orionini who, facing an unprecedented situation, reproduce the behavior and style of the Founding Father.

Someone recalled that Don Orione, at the news of the earthquakes, left everything and left for Messina and Avezzano. And what about us? We must look for the spirit that moved Don Orione to such actions. How would he want us to behave today?

Don Orione inspires us... with compassion...

In his address to the capitulars (2016), Pope Francis told us that "in certain places" we, the Orionines, were known as "the priests who run, because they were always seen on the move, in the midst of the people, with the rapid pace of those who are in need". Of course, now we can't run with our legs (I recommend # stay home), but nobody has to harness our heart. In fact, there is an old saying, "Ubi amor, ibi oculus" (where there is love, there is the ability to see). For Don Orione, the inverse is also true: "Ubi oculus, ibi amor".

So, faced with the continuous flow of news, so as not to remain closed in a sterile emotionality, Don Orione invites us to active compassion: "Take care of your health, but always work, with zeal, with ardor for the cause of God, of the Church, of

souls". Who does not have under the eyes the image of Don Orione, with a child on his shoulder, walking through the rubble of the earthquake? Or don't you remember the last "Yes" pronounced a few moments before he died so that a person in need would be welcomed at Cottolengo in Genoa? In Don Orione's life there are many concrete demonstrations of his compassion and it is he himself who invites us to follow him in this ministry: "Dress yourselves, therefore, with affectionate compassion for the wretched and above all with that charity that is the bond of perfection.

Don Orione inspires us... to prayer...

It would be easy to fall into "pietism" or "goodism", but we all know that in Don Orione nothing exists that does not pass through prayer. Just a few words are enough to face this situation in faith: "Courage, O my children, take courage also, and soar forth in piety and work for the glory of the Lord and the health of you and of many, many souls! I understand that moments of abandonment and discouragement can come to everyone (...), but prayer, the Holy Sacraments and trust in God must lift you up and comfort you (...).

Since we are quite limited in our concrete apostolate, let us take advantage of it to pray and to make people pray: from every danger the Lord will free us "if we humbly commend ourselves to Our Lady, our Mother, and all our life and faithful soul will lay at the feet of Jesus, O my son. Jesus is the God of all comfort and the Father of all heavenly consolation, who will console us in every hour and despair of life".

Don Orione inspires us... to the fantasy of charity...

Don Orione, throughout his life, faced many difficulties and unforeseen events, but he always overcame them with the imagination of charity. It would be enough to think of the young Orione with the mandolin under the prison windows; of the time when he disguised himself as a nurse to give the sacraments to the Hon. Alessandro Fortis, former Prime Minister of the Italian government, eluding the Masonic vigilance placed in the sickroom, because "I felt sorry to see him die like that"; or when he had the courage to ask the king for a car to transport the earthquake orphans. What "fantasies" will we tell after this emergency? Now that people can't come directly to us, now that the children can't play in the oratory, now that we can't celebrate in church or go to bless houses and visit the sick, the words of the Founder resonate more truthfully than ever: "Preserve me, O my God, from the

evil illusion, from the diabolical deception that I priest must take care only of those who come to church...".

Don Orione inspires us... to protect our guests...

The poor are our masters, and taking care of them is "taking care of Jesus". In our structures we have many people in vulnerable situations, so it is more important than ever to take care of the organization and coordination of all those initiatives that can protect them. They are "the treasure of the Church," and it is also in His name that we must ensure that every security precaution is taken. Don Orione said: "You see that the time has passed in which orders were given: now the servants are us, and our masters are God, the Church and those who are hospitalized in our Houses. Let us do it for the love of God, and we shall gain Paradise: now we shall make ourselves saints, if we really know how to make ourselves servants of others, and especially of those who live with us. Look that here lies a great secret to make us saints: make us servants of those who live with us." The exercise of authority and good management, at this time, is the most important service to fragile people to defend and protect them.

Don Orione inspires us... to fraternal life in community...

Just to smile, I quote a phrase of Don Orione, obviously said in a very different context from today's: "I wish that one does not leave the House without real necessity and without permission from the Superior of the House and that he knows where one goes, and when one returns". We may have said this to many families and many young people, but it also applies to us: this is an opportune time to rediscover our brothers and sisters and strengthen family ties with them. Two of our elderly priests, placed for their safety in isolation, said to me: "What do we do all day? I take care of him and he takes care of me. We encourage each other." While respecting safety regulations, we take advantage of this time to pray together, have a few formative meetings, have moments of leisure, encourage each other and take care of each other.

Don Orione inspires us... to maintain our trust in Divine Providence.

"The future belongs to Christ!" There are many letters from Don Orione in which this sentence dominates. On the other hand, he himself wanted us to be called "Sons of Divine Providence". This sensitivity of Don Orione's is so clear and strong

that we, his sons, faced with any difficulty, even immense, can take comfort in repeating his words to us: "If therefore our victory is certain, let us not abandon ourselves to upheaval or discouragement, when we see that not everything goes as it should. In the children of Divine Providence there must never enter any discouragement or sadness: let us fight under such a master, such a leader, that it would be unseemly not to say timidity to lose our courage. We are soldiers of Christ: we must have unlimited trust in Him! We are children of Divine Providence: we must have faith and confidence fully in God who is our father. Let us put all our sorrows and weaknesses in Him: to the souls who trust in Him everything ends well. And where we do not arrive: where we can no longer arrive, He, the Lord, begins! We are in the hands of Providence. Go ahead with love not only with souls, but with yourself".

Don Orione inspires us... to small gestures...

I already brought back some "crumbs of good" at the beginning. We are learning that it is the small gestures that create the day, that make our life tasty. Maybe we are used to wondering: How much did I do today? It doesn't matter, let us sow the good with abundance and the Lord will make it bear fruit as much and as He wants. In ordinariness we can make extraordinary gestures: "Every drop forms the stream, and the streams give us the great rivers; the means that a good person can dispose of so many times are soon exhausted, not so when there are a hundred, there are a thousand.

Don Orione inspires us... to use the media...

I am thinking of many initiatives that you have promoted in streaming to bring Mass, prayers, adoration, but also the many small messages of hope via Facebook, WhatsApp, etc. to homes. Do you remember Don Orione's pen? It was always on the move so that those who were unreachable could still feel close to him and supported by his words of faith and hope. I would dare, in this sense, to propose not only to forward or spread the messages of others, but to share your own stories and reflections on what you are experiencing. But let's pay attention to quality communication!

Don Orione, in his time, with the means available, wrote: "Go, O poor little leaflet of Divine Providence, fly happily through mountains and valleys, and, wherever you come, let the paths of earth and heaven resound with joy and song! Everywhere will be a soul to save, a pain to soothe, a tear to dry, there fly like a consoling angel, or sheet of Providence! Merciful to all misery, balm to the afflicted, a word of comfort and hope in a day without weeping that will not go down! Like a

breath of divine love, shed light, touch, convert, and lift from all hearts every heart, and from every clod lift the sweetest hymn of divine charity!".

Don Orione inspires us... to think of tomorrow...

Many are calling this huge experience a war. If this is so, there will be the post-war period and we must prepare ourselves to rebuild, not so much bridges or roads or even rebuild buildings or houses, but people; to recover social attitudes of brotherhood, of sharing, of participation in the activities of the Church.

There are also those who see this period as a "propitious occasion" to re-learn values such as the use of time, staying in the family, sobriety of life, etc. After the crisis, there will be a hurry to restart the economy, re-establish schools, reschedule cultural and sporting events and perhaps even recover all those "festivals" that have been lost. Is it not by chance that we will forget, once again, those values learned at great cost?

It's up to us, orionini, to do the work of accompanying and forming consciences on priorities. We are already starting today to build tomorrow. It's nice to remember what the young Ignazio Silone, in a moment of discouragement, wrote to Don Orione. It was 29 July 1918: "In some cases life is saved only by those who have a son, those who have a father, or those who believe in a blessed life. I remembered that one day when you wrote to me you called me son and me father. (...) Father, my health is ruined, my studies are ruined, I still want to rebuild, rebuild, rebuild! Help me! Repeat to me the words of hope, lead me back to the living waters of life."

It was like someone telling us today: Father, give me a future! A reason to keep believing! A push to get out of this dark, dead end. After this Lent so different and so hard, help me celebrate Easter!

P. Tarcisio Vieira, March 22, 2020