******Rome, 12 March 2021

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***"The first job is vocations"***

## Dearest Confrere

***Son of Divine Providence,***

“*I bless the Lord who calls you to the religious life with me in this humble Congregation of his Divine Providence!*”

These are words that Don Orione addressed to an aspirant (cf. Scr. 42, 165) in a letter of uncertain date and, precisely because of its timelessness, becomes a greeting that continues to resonate in our times and our hearts. We must feel it this way: as addressed to each of us. Unceasingly, Don Orione rejoices in the Lord for the gift of the vocation of His children and members of His religious family.

It is right, therefore, to attribute the title of “Father ***of Vocations***" to Don Orione, whose **81st** anniversary of his ***dies natalis*** we are celebrating today, March 12th. In a way, it was he who said: "*I have few ambitions, but I have this: I want to be called the priest of vocations.*” (cf. Papasogli, Vita di Don Orione, p. 365). More appropriate still would be to say "***Father*** ***of the Poor Vocations***", following his wish: the Congregation *"is ready to accept poor boys, as long as they give good hope for the Church."* (cf. Letter of 15/08/1927). Here in Chile, where I am for a visit, I listened to yet another account of confirmation from those who, thinking of being a priest, was destined elsewhere, but because of the poor economic conditions of the family, found acceptance only by Don Orione.

We know well how much the care of vocations was in the heart of our Father. It is like a responsorial refrain: *The* *care of vocations was in the heart of our Father!* With every paragraph of his life, it can be repeated. An enthusiasm which He expressed in concrete terms: "*For the vocations of poor children how much walking! I went up so many stairs: I knocked at so many doors! And God carried me on like his rag. I suffered hunger, thirst, and the most painful humiliation: and even though they looked like God's biscuits! I have also incurred many debts, but Divine Providence never let me fail. And I would have a great grace, if Jesus wanted to grant me, for vocations, to go begging bread to the end of my life.*" (From the circular for the "Questua delle Vocazioni, 15/08/1927).

The next year 2022, on June 23rd, we will celebrate 150th **years of Don Orione's** birth and we, members of the General Council, have thought that the best way to celebrate this event is to give it meaning and vocational content. This is why today, March 12th, also on behalf of my Council, I announce and convoke for the whole Congregation the realization of the

**ORIONINE VOCATIONAL YEAR**

**To be celebrated from 23 June 2021 until 23 June 2022.**

We will certainly have other events to celebrate the Father's 150th anniversary; for this purpose, a special commission is being set up which will involve the representatives of the Little Missionary Sisters of Charity, the Orionine Lay Movement, the Diocese of Tortona, and also the Parish of Pontecurone. However, I believe the most important event, for us, will rightly be the Vocational Year, both because it will accompany us throughout the Jubilee year (2021 – 23 June - 2022), as well as for the fact that the "birthday gift" most awaited by the birthday boy is undoubtedly that of an event capable of arousing *"workers and good workers to the vast fields of faith and charity! "*

The decision of the General Council was inspired by an initiative of the Province "Nossa Senhora de Fatima" - Brasil Norte, which aims to achieve some specific objectives, such as giving new impetus to the Vocation Animation Service, promoting the formation of religious in the area of vocation animation, strengthening or implementing vocation ministry in the parishes of Don Orione, giving vocational content to the events and activities of the pastoral year, strengthening the Youth and Vocation Movement in the parishes and, finally, supporting prayer initiatives for vocations.

It is important to say that, although convened by the General Council, the initiative will be carried out by the Provincial Directors and their Councils. It is a commitment that I ask of them because, in the specifics of their reality, they can develop suitable objectives and organize programming that involves the communities of the province and the religious. To give concrete form to this orientation, I ask the Provincial Directors that, from next April, in all meetings of the Provincial Council there should be a representative on the Orionine Vocational Year to inform, plan and evaluate the realization of the event. For its part, the General Council, accompanying the Minutes of the Councils, will be able to intervene with specific suggestions, promote the sharing of information between the Provinces and propose activities for the entire Congregation. I would like to point out that all the Provincial Councils are ready to start the required programming immediately. Even those that are finishing three years: can plan something, achieve it, and leave it as a legacy.

It is worth making a joint effort on behalf of Don Orione that motivates all the Provinces, Communities, and religious to pray, reflect and plan concrete actions for vocations. Don Orione would say: "*Let us sow with our hearts full of love and hope, that we will reap some fruit. Some seed will be lost - there will be cheats - but the other will give sixty, eighty, and one hundred percent. Finally, we work for the Glory of God and he will not reward us points in proportion to the number of successful vocations, but to those, we have sought and studiously cultivated.*  ***So, all hands on deck!*** “(From a conversation with his religious, in Campocroce, on July 29, 1924).

Courage, then, dear confreres. We are preparing for a feast; the joy of being children of this saint is the backbone of all our activities and the key to the success of our work of vocation promotion.

Fraternally,

Fr. Tarcisio Vieira

*Superior General*