

**PICCOLA OPERA
DELLA DIVINA PROVVIDENZA**

(Don Orione)

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DIRETTORE GENERALE

"It's Urgent to leave!"

**Dear
Confreres and members of the Orione Family,**

I am beginning to write this letter in Benin, precisely in Malanville, the cradle of our presence in this African nation. I am at the end of the itinerary that, together with Fr. Assamouan Pierre Kouassi, General Councilor in charge of the Missions, and Fr. Jean-Baptiste Dzankani, has taken me through the new missionary realities of the Congregation in Africa and to touch upon the prospects for the development of the Orione charism.

The Lord has been very good to us! Not only did He bless the journey, but He transformed it into a "holy journey," as our journey in Benin accompanied the rhythm of the liturgy of Holy Week. And you can imagine with how much enthusiasm and joy we celebrated, with our Confreres, Palm Sunday in Akpassi (in the center of the nation) and Easter Sunday in Malanville (in the north).

I will not be able to describe the intensity of the people's participation in the songs and dances, in the strong rhythm of the drums. The movement of the body, in a natural cadence, and the clapping of the hands, in a spontaneous and original rhythm, burst out as if they were the result of a well rehearsed choreography. But no! No choreographic rehearsal, no rigid rules; just that of naturally giving voice to the body and letting oneself be led by the compass of the melodies and the desire to praise the Lord. Liturgically composed in a harmonious way, without any out-of-tune protagonists, the sound of the songs and liturgical texts, first and foremost the Easter Precony, is welcomed by the ear, touches the heartstrings, provokes jumps of joy, makes the eyes water and feels the presence of the Mystery. Human liturgy? No, Divine! A journey towards Heaven. In the joy of the poor, the certainty: Christ is truly risen, Alleluia!

Celebrating Easter in this genuinely missionary context, I spontaneously recalled Don Orione's experience in Argentina, particularly for the opening of the mission in the Chaco. To tell the truth, the initial motivation for such an approximation was for secondary aspects. In fact, we can describe some aspects of the mission in northern Benin with the words that Fr. Orione used to speak about the mission in Chaco, which he began in 1937: there is a large cotton industry (Scr. 25,197); it is very hot (Scr. 37,248) and the temperature is often 40 degrees Celsius or more; even at night it is very hot (Scr. 47,223); it is a place where no one wanted to go (Scr. 37,248). Some difference, however, Don Orione would have noticed in verifying the impressive number of mosques instead of evangelical halls, evangelical church and synagogue. Then, the comparative discourse becomes deeper: land of true mission (Scr. 19,188); there you will have to do everything (Scr. 25,198); Here, there is so much need! I accepted (...) because the Holy Father said: do not stop at the edge, where cities are like Milan, but go to the interior, where few or no one wants to go. (...) it is a position where there is nothing to enjoy, there is everything to suffer, and there is to live the life of the true missionary. [There are Muslims], why won't we be there? And why will there not be those who think of the souls of the poor? (Scr. 47:224).

The Lord is waiting for you there

The liturgical texts of the Octave of Easter emphasize that "Galilee," the district of the Gentiles, is the place of the encounter with the Risen Lord: "Go and proclaim to my brethren that they should go into Galilee, and there they will see me." (Mt 28:10). As we well know, this is not only a geographical reference; it also indicates a theological place, the place of the manifestation of the Risen Lord. There, in the midst of the "people who were in darkness", in the midst of difficulties, in everyday life, the Lord precedes his disciples.

Don Orione was well aware of this Paschal dynamism when, in February 1937, he sent his first missionary to the Chaco, Don Enrico Contardi, "a 50-year-old priest from Lombardy who was always an angel, raised as a boy by Divine Providence" (Scr. 50,25), and he did so with these words: "I am sending you there in the Name of God, and there the Lord is waiting for you! (Scr. 25:197).

We will have the opportunity, later on, to reflect on the meaning of these words of profound spiritual sensitivity and of a very high theology of mission, as well as of consecrated life. For now, let us take up the text of the letter of sending that Don Orione sent to Don Contardi on February 6, 1937 (Scr. 25,197f). In it, three times, he insists on the urgency of the missionary's departure, in this way:

a) *It's Urgent to Leave! - You will spend a day in Itati; go first to get the blessing of the Blessed Virgin of Itati.*

Don Orione does - and teaches to do - everything in the light of Mary. In fact, the departure is urgent, but one cannot embark on the journey without the blessing of the Mother and Celestial Foundress: "Everything through Mary!".

b) *It's Urgent to Leave! - I will leave you my own Crucifix and the Gospel.*

A very strong gesture, deeply symbolic. "Crucifix" and "Gospel" are the symbols that will make visible the communion, the unity of spirit and purpose with the Founder. Don Orione, who wanted so much to remain a missionary in the Chaco, in that moment becomes, he too, a missionary "present" symbolically in the future actions of Don Contardi. It is an image full of emotion. They are the signs of the "charism", that precious "experience of the Spirit, transmitted by the Founder to his disciples, to be lived, preserved, deepened and constantly developed by them" (cf. *Mutuae Relationes*, 11). Biblically, I think I am not exaggerating when I say that this is comparable to the moment when the prophet Elisha receives the mantle of Elijah (cf. 1 Kings 19:19). The new prophet is recognized as the continuer of Elijah's mission by the possession of his cloak and, because of this, he will be able to perform the same actions as the prophet. This is also the case for Don Contardi who sees confirmed, in the possession of the signs, his belonging to the heart of Don Orione. He will be recognized as an "Orionino" in announcing the passion of the Lord and the Gospel according to "my" spirit. In synthesis, this image is the external, prophetic and symbolic sign of the charismatic transmission.

c) *It's Urgent to Leave! - In your [previous] place Fr. Dutto will go....*

The missionary becomes aware that he is not "irreplaceable"; he is only a "part", albeit an important one, of a project much greater than himself. He must enter into the dynamisms of consecrated life of transfers, replacements, and relationships.

"It's Urgent to Leave!": recent missionary movements in the Congregation

Don Orione's command to Don Contardi still resonates and has always been a source of inspiration for the Congregation. Recent missionary developments confirm this.

a) Benin: the first opening in Malanville.

In 2017, Benin was included in the Orione geography, as part of the Notre Dame d'Afrique Province, in addition to Ivory Coast, Togo and Burkina Faso. But the first initiative for the opening in this nation dates back to 1984, when the African mission was discussing the organization of the formation process of future aspirants and the possibility of sending theology students to the "Grand Séminaire of Ouidah", in Benin. On that occasion, the Archbishop of Cotonou had also offered a pastoral area to the Congregation, but the superiors deemed it more appropriate to send the students to Anyama (Ivory Coast).

Over the years, Benin has remained a dream, a line always present in the various development programs of our mission in Africa, especially because of its strategic location, next to Togo and bordering also on Burkina Faso. It offered the possibility of logical and geographically progressive growth. However, it was precisely the geographic factor that pushed the confreres to look harder for a new opening in Ghana. Probably attracted by the idea of filling an "Orione geographic void" around the triad of Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso and Togo.

Divine Providence surprised us by working differently and preparing a place for us in Benin. The initiative was taken by Bishop Mons. Clet Feliho who, in December 2016, wrote to the Provincial, Fr. Basile Aka: *"Providence wanted me to share my pastoral concerns with a priest who let me know that your Institute - which I know well and have frequented in the past - is thinking of wanting to establish itself in Benin. I immediately wanted to take the opportunity to make the request to open a community in my diocese."*

The Bishop is very clear and harbors no illusions: it is the diocese of Kandi, *"located in the deep north of Benin, it is the largest, where living and working conditions are not the best. This diocese, on the border with Niger, Burkina Faso and Nigeria in particular, is experiencing a very exacerbated influx of Islam and traditional religions. This phenomenon, even more accentuated by the myriad of sects, limits somewhat the progress of evangelization, the work of which is initiated and carried out by a small number of pastoral agents. Given the rather precarious and harsh climatic realities, very few people actually decide to serve in this diocese."*

Negotiations for the opening of a community in the diocese went ahead and led us to the city of Malanville, on the border with Niger (our house is about 1km from the border). The city has more than 120,000 inhabitants (2006 estimate), mostly Muslims (about 90%) and is known as a center of trade. In this context our confreres Fr. Kokou Assoume Benjamin DAKOU, Fr. Claude Michel GOUA, Fr. Yendouyale (Adam) NABISSIEKOU, are working, together with the aspirant Desire EHOUMAN.

Spending a few days in Malanville, I better understood the depth and the challenges that the Bishop's words, in thanking the opening of the Community, only hinted at: "It is a great joy for me to learn that your Congregation has agreed to open a community in a diocese of first evangelization, in a strongly Islamized and poor environment. The climate is not so favourable either. Nevertheless, you have agreed to come and settle for your faith and love of Jesus Christ, for whom nothing is impossible and who asks us, through Pope Francis, to go to the peripheries."

b) Benin: the second community at Akpassi

Thinking about the development of our presence in Benin, after the opening in Malanville, became a strategic project of government, to promote the consolidation of the charism in this new nation and not to leave a single community in the north detached and isolated.

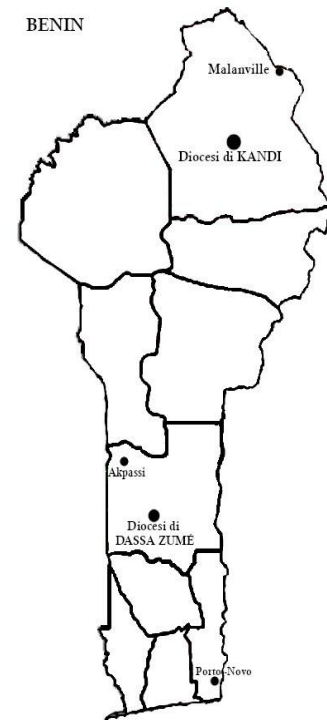
Again Providence went into action with the same strategy, putting another Bishop of Benin in contact with the Congregation. In fact, in the month of December 2019, after a providential meeting with Fr. Jean-Baptiste Dzankani, Bishop François-Xavier Gnonhossou, Bishop of Dassa-Zoumé, wrote to me, inviting us to an opening in his diocese, more central in the geography of Benin and very large, the second one after Kandi. He also informed me of his desire to welcome the Congregation on the occasion of the celebration of the first centenary of the evangelization of the territory and the 25th anniversary of the juridical erection of the diocese.

The contacts deepened during 2020, with some difficulties due to the pandemic, but we arrived at the decision to accept, initially, an exploratory mission in the village of Akpassi, about 100 km from the seat of the diocese and with about 15,000 inhabitants, composed of different ethnic groups: Itchas, Yoruba, Ifès and Peuls. In October 2020, the Province sent two confreres - Fr. Kokou Fo Edem (Paul) ASSIDENOU and Fr. Anthime Kiswendsida KABORE - to get to know better the pastoral and educational reality of the village. Now, after the canonical visit and the dialogue with the Bishop, we are ready to definitively accept the pastoral responsibility on the Parish "St. Michel" of Akpassi, with three chapels: Banon, Kouradjato and Tchambala; whose liturgical language is Yoruba. In addition, we will have responsibility for the "Saint Michel" d'Akpassi School Complex which, from kindergarten to high school, has a total of 492 students. Of these, a small portion are interns who live in the facility.

It is a gesture of great trust on the part of the Bishop, Monsignor François-Xavier, an SMA (Society of African Missions) religious, who generously gave the Congregation the possibility of having a parish and a school complex which, well administered, can still grow and be a field of charismatic apostolate for the Province.

In justifying his decision, the Bishop did not speak to us about the lack of priests in the diocese (the south of Benin traditionally has more vocations and Catholics are in greater numbers than the north); nor did he mention serious administrative problems in the school complex (we had the impression that careful administration and good pedagogical efforts can raise its level); but he did tell us that he called the congregation (the first since the diocese was erected 25 years ago) because of the need the diocese has for the witness of a life of fraternal communion and simplicity (poverty of life). He feels his clergy are very closed and wants the presence of religious for their witness and to provoke an opening towards high values of priestly and ecclesial life.

We left the meeting with the Bishop and then Akpassi with the feeling of having received a mission of great responsibility. Certainly, also a great opportunity for the Province "Notre Dame d'Afrique"! A beautiful gift of Divine Providence!



c) Benin: a plot of land in the capital

When we were still alone in Malanville, the General Council came up with the idea of buying a plot of land on the outskirts of the economic capital, in Cotonou, in view of future investment projects. A first attempt (in Allada) failed due to the lack of regular documentation (50 heirs!).

The initiative to buy a plot of land in the diocese of Porto Novo, the official capital of Benin, was different, thanks to the help of the young parish priest of the "Notre Dame de la Route" parish, who introduced us to a space next to the one reserved for a chapel of the parish (a plot of 2,700m², now already fenced in, along the road to Nigeria; the border is 7km away and the Atlantic Ocean beach is 1km away).

The location of the land (next to a future chapel), its size (in addition to the construction of a residence for the religious, it can also receive some small charitable activities) and the great kindness of the parish priest who was willing (I would say, eager) for our presence, show that the expense made is truly an investment for the future. The meeting with the Bishop of Porto Novo, Monsignor Aristide Gonsallo, who was willing to get to know the Congregation and its charism, also supports us in our hope.

In the long and tiring car journeys, between one place and another, I found myself reflecting several times on the fact that, in Benin, we had a relatively rapid growth, with very substantial prospects for consolidation and development of our presence. It always came naturally, first, the certainty that everything was done by Providence giving us every reality. Then, it came to me to think that Providence, following the acceptance of Malanville, has, in a certain way, rewarded the generosity and willingness of the congregation, in starting from a poor place without many prospects, a place where Islamic pressure is so strong and relevant that the greatest pastoral demand is to maintain and support the few Christians, the majority of whom are not native to the place, who live in the "diaspora". I am certain that the Lord has looked at the condition of our religious: they live in a very complex and difficult context (the climate is annoying even for an African), with the diversity of languages and the lack of easy and effective means of communication and even transportation. I leave it to you to imagine the fatigue that presence on the frontier requires. However, I have seen confreres with smiles on their faces, happy to be Orionines in that place, serving the people. Surely, it is also for this reason that Providence is already arousing in some young people in Benin the desire to be Orionines. *Deo gratias!*

d) Madagascar: a new opening in Beroboka

It is only recently that Madagascar was established as a "Delegation" (2018). In recent years, much work has been done to consolidate our presence in the traditional locations (Anatihazo, Antsofinondry and Faratsiho) and in the recent openings (Ambanja and Miandrarivo). A new opening was not thought of, especially after the death of Don Luigi Piotto and after some defections. However, the difficulty of sending the postulants for the Novitiate in Ivory Coast and the call of a Bishop made us rethink our plans. Therefore, two missionary priests from the Province of Notre Dame d'Afrique were sent to the Delegation: Fr. Saidou Emmanuel Marie ABDOU and Fr. M. Richard TAGBA. With their help it is possible to plan the opening of the Novitiate for the year 2021-22 and a new missionary presence.

We are ready to leave for Beroboka, in the Diocese of Morondava, after the invitation of the Carmelite Bishop Monsignor Marie Fabien Raharilamboniaina. Some confreres have already visited the diocese, including the Delegate, Fr. Luciano Mariani, who has kept in touch with the Bishop.

He is the one who wrote to me: *"The Bishop wants to give us a parish district that is 70 km from Morondava, the seat of the diocese. There is a central church, which has been a place of worship for 76 years, with 19 neighborhoods spread over a territory of 400km², with about 30,000 inhabitants. Of these districts only seven have a small church and three elementary schools. The center of the District is Boroboka, with a small church and an elementary school with 200 pupils. Next to the main church the bishop has already built the house for the priests."*



The Delegate also informs me that, before presenting the application to the General Council, he asked the opinion of the confreres in perpetual vows, gathered for the two days of annual formation on March 12: *"after illustrating to them what we saw, the desire of the people, the opening of horizons of the bishop, they all gave a favorable opinion."* He concludes, *"If Don Orione were still alive, he would have agreed immediately in the face of the thirst for God and thirst for education, for humanity that so many people feel. Don Orione had a big heart, and why can't we have that?"* So, it is Urgent to Leave!

e) Orionine "Querida Amazonia".

"The Church is called to walk with the peoples of Amazonia." (Cf. QA 61). This call of Pope Francis is resonating strongly in the Province "Nossa Senhora de Fátima" - North Brazil. The Congregation also wants to walk with the peoples of the Amazon and, after the 2004 opening of the presence in Buritis, has promoted other more recent openings in the heart of the Amazon: Candeias do Jamari (2018) and Boa Vista (2020).

Lately, with some insistence, one Bishop in particular, of the Prelature of Borba, Msgr. Zenildo Luiz Pereira da Silva, has been asking for an Orione presence. However, in the impossibility of giving immediate consent to a new opening, I suggested to the Provincial to organize a mission to help that reality. It would be a way to get to know the region better, verify the alternatives of support and give a helping hand to a church in need; it would give the Province time to reorganize itself, perhaps promoting a restructuring of the traditional presences and a better distribution of religious personnel.



It is urgent to leave for the Amazon! Who wants to respond to Don Orione's cry?

"It is urgent to leave": the dynamics of the outgoing movement.

There are other missionary movements in gestation in the Congregation, some of them within their own provinces or missionary nations. Some are a bit slowed down by the situation of the health emergency, while others are waiting for a jolt of courage, community initiative and prophecy. However, the missionary dynamisms of departure do not refer only to new openings outside the traditional geographical frontiers of the Congregation. Don Orione's "Urge Partire," uttered in Latin America, connects to the "going out" movement ("the outgoing Church") promoted by a Latin American Pontiff, Pope Francis.

From a missionary perspective, "Leaving" and "Going out" are verbs with a very wide semantic universe. The length of this letter only allows me to mention them, and I do so by recalling two interventions of Pope Francis to the Orionine Family. To the FDP Chapter members, during the Audience of May 27, 2016, he said words that should push us to recover our identity as "running priests," as religious "leaving."

"The proclamation of the Gospel, especially in our day, requires a great deal of love for the Lord, combined with a special resourcefulness. I have learned that, while the Founder was still alive, in certain places they called you 'the priests who run', because they saw you always on the move, in the midst of the people, with the rapid pace of those who are in a hurry. "Amor est in via", Saint Bernard reminded us, love is always on the road, love is always on the way. With Don Orione, I too urge you not to remain closed in your own circles, but to go "out". There is a great need for priests and religious who do not stop at charitable institutions - necessary though they are - but who know how to go beyond the confines of these institutions, to bring the fragrance of Christ's charity to every environment, even the most distant. Never lose sight of the Church or of your religious community; indeed, the heart must be there in your 'cenacle,' but then you must go out to bring God's mercy to everyone, indiscriminately."

To our Sisters, on the occasion of their General Chapter, he said:

"I never tire of repeating that comfort, sloth, and worldliness are forces that prevent the missionary from "going out," "setting out," and setting out and ultimately sharing the gift of the Gospel. The missionary cannot set out with a heart full of things (comfort), an empty heart (sloth), or in search of things foreign to the glory of God (worldliness). The missionary is a person free from all these ballasts and chains; a person who lives without anything of his own, only for the Lord and his Gospel; a person who lives on a constant journey of personal conversion and works tirelessly at pastoral conversion." (May 26, 2017)

In summary, Pope Francis' exhortations to the sons and daughters of Don Orione want to provoke us to a return to the centrality of the "sequela Christi." Thus he himself has said to us, "We are all setting out in the following of Jesus. The whole Church is called to walk with Jesus on the roads of the world, to meet the humanity of today that needs the "bread of the body and the divine balm of faith," but for this a further "missionary movement of departure" is necessary: "Do not withdraw into yourselves, do not let yourselves be asphyxiated by the little quarrels of home, do not remain prisoners of your own problems. These will be solved if you go out to help others solve their problems and proclaim the good news. You will find life by giving life, hope by giving hope, love by loving." (Apostolic Letter to All Consecrated Persons, November 21, 2014).

To give witness to the presence of the Lord

In sending Don Contardi to the Chaco, Don Orione said: "I am sending you there in the Name of God, and there the Lord is waiting for you!"

I had promised to return to these words which, I said, are of deep spiritual sensitivity and very high theology of the mission, as well as of consecrated life. This is because they emphasize that the presence of the Risen Lord in the Galilee of the mission precedes that of the disciples. In this way, Don Orione is saying that Don Contardi will not go to Chaco to "bring" the Lord, but will go to "meet" the Lord who is already there, to make His presence visible and to serve Him in the person of the poor.

And how will he do this?

It is good to recall my previous letter which, already in its title, "Fraternal Life as Mission," indicated the principal place of the witness we are called to give to the Church and to the world. It was a reflection starting from the Encyclical "All Confreres", a text - I said - "intended for us": "We are called to give witness to charity, to "lived fraternity" in community. A fraternity made up of welcome, respect, mutual help, understanding, courtesy, forgiveness and joy. And this, in the small everyday things, but also in the most elevated situations, as for example, in living together with confreres of different ethnic groups and nationalities. Fraternity lived among us, particularly in these circumstances, is charismatic because it opens our hearts to fraternity toward all, to having a 'Heart without boundaries!'"

To confirm this, I return to the two Bishops of Benin. I have already said that the Bishop of Dassa-Zoumé called us, above all, in function of the "witness" that the Consecrated Life can give to his diocese, citing fraternity and simplicity of life. I add here, however, other words of the Bishop of Kandi, Malanville, Mgr. Clet who, in greeting the approval of the opening of the Community, wrote to the Provincial: "Thank you for the first community that will be established in the parish of Malanville, which this year has remained without a priest, due to the lack of truly pastoral agents. It would be good for these pioneers to be well welded together and to love each other so that the evil spirit will not divide them."

I read, I must confess, with some trembling at the Bishop's words. What a responsibility for us! In truth, however, the Bishop is only making explicit what is already said in the Constitutions: "Instaurare omnia in Christo is the proper end of our vocation; for us to be one, as the body of Christ, is the form of our following and our witness. In fact, we will have a great Catholic renewal if we have a great charity. We must, however, begin to exercise it among ourselves today. Therefore, let us live in community..." (Const. Art. 49).

The witness of fraternal life is the proprium of consecrated life and comes before (in a sense that is not necessarily chronological) the apostolate. Better: it is our apostolate. It is the way to make visible the presence of Christ in the Galilee of the Gentiles. In a fragmented context of so many divisions and fractures, fraternal life possesses an enormous force of attraction. As Pope Benedict XVI said, the Church grows not by proselytism, but by attraction, that is, through the witness of a joyful and fraternal life (Cf. EG 14). This is why Don Orione, in sending Fr. Contardi to Chaco on February 6, 1937, promised: "I will give you a hermano and, as soon as possible, I will also send you a good priest to help you. It is urgent to leave!" The conditions were thus created for us to be able to say of them, and of the Orione disciples of all times, "*they were assiduous... in fraternal union, in the breaking of bread and in prayer*".

The Orionine Vocational Year

Last March 12, I announced the celebration of the Orionine Vocational Year, from June 23, 2021 until June 23, 2022, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Don Orionine, "Father of Vocations." Sr. M. Mabel Spagnuolo also did the same for the Little Missionary Sisters of Charity.

We thought that the best way to celebrate this Orionine jubilee is to give it a vocational meaning and content. It was not our intention to add one more activity to the calendar of the Provinces and Communities, which is already overflowing with commitments, but rather we want each of our activities or commitments during this "time" to be vocational.

We will start with a "Virtual Vocational Table" in three sessions: Europe Session on May 4; America Session on May 10; Africa and Asia Session on May 11. In these meetings, we will evaluate the organization of vocational animation in the various provinces and promote an exchange of ideas on the initiatives we can take together to live this vocational "time" well.

This year we will celebrate several occurrences in the Congregation that are the result of the responses that so many have given to Don Orione's "It is Urgent to leave". Some, remember that it was he himself who set himself in motion. I list some of these that may be opportunities to promote the vocational dimension in the Congregation:

- **June 12:** Centenary of the inauguration of the Pietro and Maria Berna Vocational Institute, in Mestre (Venice).
- **4 August:** Centenary of Don Orione's departure for Latin America; on the steamship Principe di Udine, Don Luigi Orione, accompanied by Don Mario Ghiglione and Don Camillo Secco, leaves Genoa. He will arrive in Brazil, in Rio de Janeiro, on the 19th of the same month.
- **August 29:** a solemn celebration in the Shrine of Bonoua will conclude the celebrations for the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the mission in the Ivory Coast; the celebration will have a strong vocational content with the perpetual profession and priestly ordination of several clerics;
- **October 25:** 30th anniversary of the death of Fr. Giuseppe Masiero, 5th successor of Fr. Orione; the Lord called him to Himself, together with Fr. Angelo Riva and Fr. Italo Saran, and a young volunteer, Rafael Angel Villanueva Escobar, when during a trip to Venezuela, a car accident halted his journey.
- **3 November:** 75th anniversary of the death of Fr Giulio Cremaschi, for 33 years the Novice Master of the Congregation.
- **November 13:** Centenary of Don Orione's arrival in Argentina.
- **December 25:** 25th anniversary of the Orione presence in Kenya; Fr. Giuseppe Vallauri was very attached to this date and will now bless the Kenyan brethren from Heaven.
- **January 11, 2022:** 70th anniversary of the beginning of the Mission in what was then "North Goiás", Tocantinópolis - Brazil; Fr. Egidio Adobati, Fr. Andrea Alice and Br. Giuseppe Serra began the mission; on January 25, two of them died in the Tocantins River: Fr. Adobati and Bro. Serra. Nevertheless, the Congregation maintains the mission.
- **February 21, 2022:** Centenary of the letter on the Christian Paternal Method.

Dear Confreres

I return with my thoughts to an image that has remained in my memory. We were visiting the grounds of Porto Novo, Benin, and we went to the nearby sea. On the beach I saw a boat, which looked abandoned, and a Brazilian vocational song by Fr. Zezinho came to mind; from his time in the minor seminary. Here is a part of it:

Há um barco esquecido na praia
Já não leva ninguém a pescar
É o barco de André e de Pedro
Que partiram pra não mais voltar.
Quantos barcos deixados na praia
Entre eles o meu deve estar
Era o barco dos sonhos que eu tinha
Mas eu nunca deixei de sonhar
Quanta vez enfrentei o perigo
No meu barco de sonho a singrar
Jesus Cristo remava comigo
Eu no leme, Jesus a remar
De repente me envolve uma luz
E eu entrego o meu leme a Jesus
É preciso pescar diferente
Que o povo já sente que o tempo chegou
E partimos pra onde ele quis
Tenho cruces, mas vivo feliz.

There is a forgotten boat on the beach
It no longer takes anyone fishing
It is the boat of Andrew and Peter
Who left never to return.
How many boats are left on the beach
Among them, mine must be there
It was the boat of dreams that I had
But I never stopped dreaming
How many times have I faced danger
On the boat of my dreams to sail
Jesus Christ was rowing with me
Me at the helm Jesus was rowing
Suddenly a light was shining on me
And I give the helm to Jesus
It is necessary to fish in a different way
That the people already feel the time has come.
And we're off to where He wanted us
I have crosses, but I live happily.



"It is Urgent to Leave!" Don Orione keeps repeating to each of us. "The Missions are not something to be taken lightly. Missions are a great field of apostolate (...) It is something to be taken seriously, precisely with that spirit which is the marrow of the holy Gospel. If the voice of God speaks to the heart of any of you, if someone has felt the call to the apostolate of faith and charity in his heart, a call to a higher apostolate, let him apply. Health, studies and many other things will be taken into account. Those who are deemed suitable may take to the sea and go..." (Words Vol. X, p. 63).

Fraternally,

P. Tarcísio Vieira
P. Tarcísio G. Vieira

