

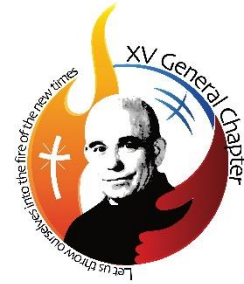
**PICCOLA OPERA
DELLA DIVINA PROVVIDENZA**

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DIRETTORE GENERALE



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Don Orione has already lived our future!

Dear Confreres,

At the end of March, the month in which we celebrated the *dies natalis* of St. Louis Orione and the Solemnity of St. Joseph, both “*men of dreams*”, we ask the Lord “*the grace of knowing how to dream, always seeking God’s will in dreams!*” (Pope Francis).

I am writing to you on March 31 to point out that there are only two months left for the beginning of the Chapter. The moment is therefore approaching when “*the legitimate representatives of the Congregation*” will gather to dream that it “*remains faithful to the Gospel, to the spirit of the Founder and so that, docile to the Holy Spirit, it responds to the needs of times and places*” (Const. 138).

The Chapter, in fact, is the privileged place of “*dreams*”, but it is not the place of “*dreamers*”, according to a subtle distinction that Pope Francis made in a homily on Saint Joseph: he was “*the man of dreams, but he was not a dreamer, he was not a romantic*”. “*The difference is substantial - continues the Pope - a dreamer is one who lives in the air and has no feet on the ground.*” Joseph, on the other hand, “*had his feet on the earth... he was open, he let the word of God come true there, in his dream, in his freedom, in his open heart. He understood and carried that dream forward. Without fantasy: the real dream, because he was not a dreamer: he was a man of substance.*” (cf. Pope Francis, Daily Meditations, 18/12/2018).

To affirm the same of Don Orione - “*man of dreams*”, but not “*dreamer*” - it would be enough to mention the dream of Our Lady of the Blue Mantle who “*projected in the spirit of our Founder a very clear certainty regarding the future development of his activity for the salvation of youth, which had just begun with the Festive Oratory*” (Cfr. DOPO I, 768).

You will remember, dear confreres, that the dynamic of dreaming was very present in the methodology of preparation for the Chapter and it will be so also during its realization. The first stage, summarized in the verb **DISCOVER**, was followed by the stage of **DREAMING**, before the third, the **PROPOSING** of concrete lines of action for the mission of charity.



The methodological stage of DREAMING was motivated as follows in the Personal Notebook: *“The previous discernment (DISCOVER) inspired you to desire new goals. The Holy Spirit who acts in us pushes you up to overcome your human limitations and to launch yourself into divine horizons. Now, to continue the itinerary, you need to identify the guidelines. There is the Word of God, the example and words of the Founder and of many heroic confreres, the teachings of the Church, and the magisterium of Pope Francis. These make you dream. However, there would be the danger that the dream remains something abstract and theoretical. So, you have to transform it into a concrete story and to do this, you can use some episodes from the Bible or from the life of Don Orione. It's the narrative moment.”*

As our appointment in Montebello della Battaglia approaches, it is time to reflect on our mission there, and to welcome the following words from Pope Francis (cf. *Ritorniamo a sognare*, p. 11). These are words written in a context different from the one of a Chapter, but they fit us as well. No doubt about it! For us, the Chapter *“is the time to dream big, to rethink our priorities - what we value, what we want, what we seek - and to commit ourselves to small things, to act according to what we have dreamed of. What I am feeling at this moment resembles what Isaiah heard God say within him: “Come and let's discuss it. Let's start dreaming.”* Or to say with Don Orione: Come and *“Let's throw ourselves into the fire of the new times!”*

Religious Life needs to grow in “Vision”

During the Pre-Capitular commission meeting, while examining the contributions of the Provincial Chapters and Assemblies, the need was noted to pay more attention to and better investigate the methodological step of “Dreaming”. This will probably be also a task of the Chapter.

Some days later, I went with Fr. Oreste Ferrari to meet, Don Rino Cozza, a religious of the St. Joseph of Murialdo Congregation, a well-known Italian writer on Religious Life, to invite him as a resource person for the chapter. There we talked about the different steps of our method. We were surprised by his words about the question of “dreaming” which he defined as “a recurrent deficiency in religious life”. In the end, he offered us a draft copy of an article he is still writing precisely on the theme: *“Religious life needs to grow in 'vision'.”* Here are some excerpts.

*“In the Bible - writes Don Rino Cozza - the word “vision” is often accompanied by the word “dream”. This is a category very dear to Pope Francis, who in the encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium* says: “I dream of a Church...” and then continues by describing a “vision” that is capable of orienting towards a form of “community life” which, today, is not made by what is done jointly, but by sharing a “vision” with those who, in the word “dream”, do not see the unrealistic image of an illusion, but desire, expectation, impetus towards something evangelically new, and hopes it will come true.”*



“In order to re-orient the development process, - continues the author - religious life now needs more thought and new “visions”, without which it will lose all design tension. The consequence is to collapse into the swamp of the choices of small coastal cruising [navigation in shallow waters], to end up no longer being able to dare follow the light of new visions, or capable of cultivating the desire. In other words, for every archaic model, the time comes to be seen as artificial, that is, that every goal has significance if it immediately accepts to be perpetually evolutionary.”

And again: *“It is time to rethink a Religious Life which, in order to be an appeal for each and every one to go out to meet the brothers in humanity, has the features and sentiments of Christ himself. But for this purpose, it needs to pass from what serves itself, closed in clerical-conventual systems of life, to what it brings to the life of Christians. Therefore, it is not appropriate for it to cultivate a spirituality without true immersion in the territory, since the religious, by vocation, are sent for a mission that does not aim to identify itself with a “work” or with an institution, but wants to be promoters among the people of communal relations. His commitment is, therefore, to give the Gospel, in its essentiality, the fullness of credibility through parables of a life lived in a community in which people will count more than abstract principles.”*

In conclusion...

Within the work dynamics of our chapter, the dimension of the dream, of the vision, has a strategic value. The risk would be to take it as a part to be completed without understanding its apostolic-charismatic value. If we are not able to dream in the right and courageous way, as Don Rino suggested, we will risk making choices which are right, from the point of view of logic, but which lack that charismatic spirit that pushed Don Orione to dare more, to go beyond his time, to try something new, in order to obtain that admirable ideal that his holiness indicated to him as the only goal of his life. We remember what our Founder said: *“Times run fast and have somewhat changed, and we, in everything that does not touch doctrine, Christian life, and the Church, must go and walk at the head of the times and the peoples, and not at the tail, lagging behind!”* (Lett I, 251).

Days ago, in the liturgy of Lent, we listened to the biblical passage of Joseph - he too, a man of dreams - and his brothers who, out of envy, throw him into a cistern (Gen 37, 8: *“They hated him even more because of his dreams and words”*). What about us? Will we have to throw our dreams, our desires, our high goals in a cistern? What place do we give to the brothers who dream? In our time, it should be legitimate to dream, not to escape reality, but to awaken creativity and audacity. This gives us the opportunity to implement an Orionine, practical and charismatic hermeneutics “as sons” (See F. Peloso, *Ermeneutica Orionina per conoscere Don Orione “Da figli”*; Messaggi n. 130)

The following appeal by Fr Ignazio Terzi remains up-to-date and meaningful, especially because it was written on May 31, 1986, in preparation for the IX General Chapter: *“It, therefore, seems to me that I should recommend to everyone, but especially to the Chapter*



Fathers, a “charismatic mind”, that is, a profound awareness of their providential mission in this historical moment of our life as a Congregation “. “We look to our vocation as guarantors of rigorous fidelity to a precious but fragile charism, bearer of a charge of genuine novelty in the spiritual life of the Church, also **devising** ingenious new ecclesial experiences in docility to the Holy Spirit by his nature as a creator. First of all, let us make sure that we are completely Orionini.” I have underlined the verb “to devise”, that is, to find with the mind, reflecting or imagining. Exactly, Dreaming!

When we say that our ideal and our dream is “*To be Don Orione, today*”, to dream his dreams, we are not professing a return to the past, but invoking his spirit to launch us into the future. We do not want to simply analyze the facts themselves, but to recognize the paradigm of charity through which he was able to interpret these facts and give them an answer. It is the paradigm that we want so that it may help us too, to live in fidelity to the charism with creativity. For this, we can say that “*Don Orione has already lived our future*”.

There are two months left to the Chapter. I invite you to rephrase the questions already addressed in the pre-chapter:

- *What dreams would God like to see you participate in?*
- *Don Orione, what would he have dreamed of seeing made by us?*
- *What paths and initiatives do you want to propose so that the Congregation embraces new styles, forms, and frontiers of the prophecy of charity?*

Make these questions the object of reflection and discussion with some confreres - perhaps as a group of the delegates of the Province - so that, during the Chapter, you can make the most of this important moment of our working method. If you want, you can also anticipate your thoughts or proposals by mail.

May the Blessed Virgin enlighten us and accompany us on this journey that will see us under her feet in the Sanctuary of the Guardia of Tortona, on 31 May next. In that festive moment, we will chant: “*Under your protection we seek refuge, Holy Mother of God!*”.

In union of prayers, especially for world peace,

P. Tarcisio Vieira

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Superiore generale

