

Question of style

Dear Confreres,

Don Orione's appeal: - ***Let us throw ourselves into the fire of the new times!*** - must continue to echo throughout the Orionine world. Although more than 1 year has passed since the General Chapter, where it was reaffirmed and reiterated in its various phases, this call is more relevant than ever. In fact, "*Let us throw ourselves*" is the conjugation of the verb in the present tense, a tense also pregnant with "past" and "future." In addition: the "present," our "present," is the folding point where past and future meet.

To the "past," we look with gratitude, because "our future is there," in the paradigmatic experience that Don Orione lived. "*If we love Don Orione, we cannot fail to repeat his charismatic experience,*" said Fr. Ignatius Terzi in presenting our Constitutions. "*If you have loved me in the past,*" Don Orione himself asked us, "*continue to love me in Domino for the future*" (Aug. 7, 1935).

"*To be Don Orione, today!*" is a vital question, a question of love that becomes, for us, a commitment to a consecrated life of quality. Today Don Orione would put at the service of Christ and the Church his best apostolic energy, as he did in his time, his profound, ecclesial sense, and the creativity of his pastoral initiatives, his love for the poor from which so many works of charity have arisen. For this reason, the same generosity and self-sacrifice that drove our Founder must move us to keep his charism alive so that, "*with the same power of the Spirit that aroused it, it may continue to be enriched and adapted, without losing its genuine character, to put itself at the service of the Church and bring to fullness the implantation of his Kingdom.*" These are words that should stimulate us. (cf. St. John Paul II. Apostolic Letter to the Religious of Latin America, 29/06/1990, no. 26).

We are now in the long post-chapter phase, the period when our most important task is to translate chapter orientations and decisions into life options. This means moving from "written words" to "lived words." We must feel that "*the strength of the charism*" is alive, feel "*the commitment it requires to be followers and family members of a great witness of Christ's charity*", feel the commitment to make present with our lives and our actions, "*the fire of charity in today's world,*" as Pope Francis has asked us to do (06/26/2022).

Dear Brothers, the XV General Chapter proposed to us a renewal itinerary to be faithful to the charism of our Founder. How can we implement it?

When he was promoting the "Little Cottolengo of Genoa," Don Orione compared it to the "*mustard seed of the Gospel, small, very small*", which, to grow, depended not on administrative strategies or the effectiveness of fundraising, but on the following personal dispositions: "*If abandoned entirely to Divine Providence, we pray with faith, if we live from the Tabernacle, if we remain humble and on our knees at the feet of the Holy Church and the poor of Jesus Christ, the Lord's Providence will make the small seed grow and expand it, to*

the comfort and salvation of a great number of unfortunate people. “(Scritti 62:125). The same principle applies now: not with our hands, not even with our brains will we carry out the program of the Chapter, but with bent knees, that is, with humility, with prayer, and in surrendering to Divine Providence.

The Chapter Assembly was able to grasp this insight in saying that *to throw ourselves into the fire of the new times*, as a primary task and “Founding Action,” we must commit ourselves to “*Making Christ the heart of the world*”, which means “*Christ-centeredness and courageous adherence to and actualization of the Orionine charism*” (15CG, no. 2f). He called for our responses to situations and problems to be given in an “*Orionine style*” (cf. 15CG, no. 57) and expressed a desire to see the “dream” of “*a mature and conscious Orionine identity*” realized, which alone can be based on Christ and “*through which religious feel themselves children of the same Father, joyful and enthusiastic brothers, courageous and fruitful in evangelization*” (cf. 15CG, no. 7).

It's all about style

If we read carefully and thoroughly the document of the 15th General Chapter, we will note the repeated use of the term “style.” It recurs as many as 18 times in the text (In texts such as *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Laudato Si'* the word appears 22 and 18 times, respectively). In the chapter document, in addition to the expression “Orionine style,” which is also more widely used in our common vocabulary, the Fathers used the term to recall the “synodal style,” the “style of mercy and tenderness,” the “style of service,” the “more evangelical style,” the “poorer style of life,” and, finally, the “style of the Orionine apostolate.” An identity is built with “style”!

A glance at the other final documents of our chapters reveals that starting from the 10th Chapter, the term is used quite frequently and in an almost nostalgic tone, to recall the desire for a recovery of Don Orione’s “style” in different spheres (spiritual, community, apostolic, charismatic...). In the Tenth General Chapter (1992: Being the Founder Today), for example, St. John Paul II, addressing the members of the chapter, wished that “*the style of poverty, simplicity, and abandonment to Divine Providence, which was proper to your Founder, be kept unaltered.*” The text of the document, then, called for the implementation, in dialogue with the world, of a “*popular style of being and acting characteristic of Don Orione*” (No. 32) and recalled the need for “the assimilation of the Constitutions, so that it may become and reminded of the need for “*the assimilation of the Constitutions so that they become a way of life*” (no. 62).

The XI General Chapter (1998: Religious and Lay Orionines in Mission in the Third Millennium) also asked, particularly those in “*places of responsibility*”, “*to interpret the charism of the Founder with dynamic fidelity, and translate it into new forms in personal and community lifestyle and works*” (n.179). In turn, the Twelfth Chapter (2004: One Hundred Years of Life: Creative Fidelity) again highlights a word of Pope John Paul II who exhorts, “*In the style of your Founder...do not be afraid to seek...the high measure of Christian life, resorting to a true pedagogy of holiness*” (cf. 12CG p. 14). The document also speaks of an “*Orionine style of service in the work*” to be implanted through a “*lay re-reading of the charism*” (p. 62).

The following two chapters - the XIII (2010: Only Charity Will Save the World) and the XIV (2016: Servants of Christ and the Poor) - take up the term in similar words to call us especially to a “*humble, simple, popular style.*”

Our Constitutions also make use of the term, offering guidelines and principles that help to concretely define what our “Orionine style” means and how to outline it in personal, community, and congregational life.

Our Constitutions propose to us ways for having a “style of obedience,” which means *especially deep respect for persons* (Art. 45), for exercising *authority in a spirit of service to the brothers and sisters* (Art. 136), and for governing *with charity and discretion in everything* (Art. 219).

With simple and ordinary proposals, they outline the “way of life” of the Orionine religious: *daily prayer, mutual understanding and generous forgiveness of offenses, exquisite charity, fraternal sharing of moments of relaxation and recreation, rejection of murmuring, gossip and all insincerity, an affectionate regard for the elderly and encouragement toward the younger ones* (Art. 64). As for the novices, the Constitutions ask us to welcome them “*into a community which responds fully to our style and where the example of simple and harmonious living, helps them to be formed in the spirit of the beatitudes and in the practice of the evangelical counsels*” (Art. 91); for regents they call for an experience that consists of “*an immediate contact with the apostolate characteristic of the Congregation (...) that will imbue them with our spirit and style of life*” (Art. 102).

Our “apostolic mission” also has its style and is “qualified” as “*that patrimony of perspectives, impulses and style proper to the Founder which guarantees, beyond the variety and multiplicity of works, our apostolic identity*” (Art. 117). What is the “style proper to the Founder”? The next article, Art. 118, clarifies it: it is characterized by the “*program that the Founder expressed in the passionate cry: Souls! Souls!*” (The full text, known by the title “Souls! Souls!,” was published in a booklet in 2015).

It is difficult to summarize that mystical poem in a few words. It is the whole text that speaks to us of the lifestyle, vocation, and mission of the Founder. To motivate us, however, to the task of a thoughtful reading of it, here is a small excerpt that could define “the Orionine style of apostolate”: “*To save always, to save all, to save at the cost of every sacrifice, with redemptive passion, with redemptive holocaust. We are intoxicated by charity and the fools of the Cross of Christ Crucified. Above all, by a humble, holy life full of good, we must teach the little ones and the poor to follow the way of God. Live in a luminous sphere, intoxicated with light and divine love of Christ and the poor, and with heavenly dew, like the lark that flies high singing in the sun. Let our table be like an ancient Christian agape. Souls! Souls! Have a great heart and the divine folly of souls.*”

This essential and brief overview of our documents already serves us to understand that the term “style” touches the concreteness of life and concerns the form with which we present ourselves to the world and the Church, in our case with an “Orionine style” that is already in itself a content and a form.

Don Orione wanted to live “like” Christ, identifying with his style: he renewed his gestures, applied his words, adopted his attitude, took charge of his preferential options, etc. He left written, “*I want to be a man of God, molded in the form of Jesus Christ.*” (Scritti 55:166). We must make the same conversion journey to have his style.

But what is “style”?

“*If no one asks me about it, I know it well: but if I would explain it to those who ask me about it, I do not know.*” This answer of Saint Augustine about “time” came to me when I

asked the question (cf. The Confessions, XI, 14). Perhaps we are in the same condition as him if we try to define “style” beyond a limited and formal dictionary illustration. The very wide application of the term and, above all, its abundant semantic richness require us to go further.

For the sake of understanding, let us start with etymology: the term derives from the Latin *stilus* (pen), which was the instrument with which one wrote, in the manner of an engraving, on a surface, such as, for example, a waxed tablet. Over time, the word came to characterize the personal way of writing and then shifted to a much broader and richer meaning that refers to everything that distinguishes a person or a work (cf. N. Galantino, in: “Il Sole 24 Ore,” 04/03/2018).

We are also helped by the Jesuit theologian Christoph Theobald in saying that the notion of style *“imposes itself from the moment we are confronted with the singularity of a certain work, of a certain author, or more simply of such a person, unique, in the face of his attitude, which no longer falls within the scope of a classificatory comparison, but within that of the manifestation of an incomparable uniqueness and authentic innovation.”* Thus, the theologian author of “Christianity as Style” applies the concept to the manifestation of the Christ figure because of *“his incomparable uniqueness as the only-begotten Son of the Father and the ever-newness of his Gospel.”* Indeed, the temple guards said, *“Never has a man spoken so!”* (Jn. 7:46). (cf. Christoph Theobald, The Christian Style, The Kingdom - Current Affairs, 22/2019).

“Style,” Theobald further summarizes, is a *“way of inhabiting the world.”* In the case of Jesus, the Gospels highlight his way of relating to people, his attitudes, and his gestures. Pope Francis' presentation of some details of Jesus' apostolic style in *Evangelii Gaudium* (no. 269) is a beautiful summary: *“How good it is for us to see [Jesus] close to everyone! If he spoke to someone, he looked into his eyes with a deep attention full of love: 'Jesus fixed his gaze on him, he loved him' (Mark 10:21). We see him open to encounter when he approaches the blind man along the road (cf. Mk 10:46-52) and when he eats and drinks with sinners (cf. Mk 2:16), not caring that they treat him as a glutton and a drinker (cf. Mt 11:19). We see him willing when he lets a prostitute anoint his feet (cf. Lk 7:36-50) or when he receives Nicodemus at night (cf. Jn 3:1-15). Jesus' self-giving on the cross is nothing less than the culmination of this style that marked his entire existence.”*

In another speech, which is very significant for us, because after presenting the “style of Jesus,” he cited Don Orione as an example of *“a priest who leads a life of encounter, with the Lord in prayer, and with people until the end of the day,”* Pope Francis was even more explicit: *“What was Jesus' style like as a shepherd? Always Jesus was on a journey. (...) This means closeness to people and closeness to problems. He did not hide. Then, in the evening, many times he would hide to pray, to be with the Father. And these two things, this way of seeing Jesus, in the street and prayer, helps so much for our daily life”* (Genoa, 5/27/2017).

From the “style of Jesus,” through discipleship, to the “style of the Christian.” Those who follow Jesus take on an identity when they become “disciples of a style,” not of an idea, but of a way to inhabit the world and to evangelize: *“We want to fit deeply into society, share life with everyone, listen to their concerns, cooperate materially and spiritually in their needs, rejoice with those who are in joy, mourn with those who mourn, and engage in the building of a new world, elbow to elbow with others. But not as an obligation, not as a burden that exhausts us, but as a personal choice that fills us with joy and gives us identity.”* (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 269).

For a style to be credible and authentic, there must, however, be consistency between content and form: what is convincing is not only what is said to the other person (content), but

the way of saying it (form). One might recall here the Latin saying that expresses the power of testimony: *Verba docent, exempla trahunt*; words teach, examples drag. In this regard, Enzo Bianchi sees that in the Gospels more warnings about “form” are found on Jesus' lips than about “content”: *“The message is always brief, concise and essentially about the coming of the kingdom of God, while Jesus' words about how that message should be proclaimed are many, precise and to the point: “Go as sheep among wolves” (cf. Mt. 10:16); “Learn from me who am meek and humble of heart” (Mt. 11:29); “Do not do as the hypocrites do” (cf. Mt. 6:2, 5, 16)...”* And again, *“The style in which the Christian stands in the world and history is therefore decisive: it depends on the faith itself, which can never be contradicted by the means and ways in which it is told, transmitted or witnessed.”* Thus, *“among the most serious contradictions to an effective Christian witness, today should be pointed out precisely the lack of style: in communicating, first of all, but also in trying to live out the demands of the Gospel.”* (Enzo Bianchi, In: Jesus Magazine, 08/2013).

The Orionine style

I have already had the experience many times - but I am sure I am not the only one - of hearing people from one part of the Orionine world to the other, in a spontaneous and very sincere way, identifying and qualifying the “Orionine style” in activities, in the way of living, of evangelizing, of leading a parish, of taking care of the most fragile, in the way we relate to people or live the consecrated life. While recognizing the style we inherited from Don Orione, people are looking at the concreteness of our life and highlighting our “own physiognomy” in the Church. And this is a value, it is an “advantage.” It is the Church itself that motivates us to live in authenticity our “patrimony,” our “identity,” our “tradition,” our “style” (cf. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 2). To be an Orionine! How much more Orionine, the better! In this vein, Pope Francis encouraged us on June 25, 2022: *“I thank you ... especially for what you are and what you do.”* And recognizing our specific identity in the Church, more recently, he said in an informal meeting, *“You have a very important charism!”* (23/11/2023).

Something important that comes to light and that begins to be shaped as a style in the very first years of formation: *“Is to remember that Don Orione takes his first “form” of thought and action - as a cleric - in the era of Rerum Novarum (1891), in the flourishing of the social, cultural and religious initiatives of the Opera dei Congressi. He was a cleric in Tortona in the seminary of Bishop I. Bandi, who for his actions and his Pastoral Letters was called “the bishop of social action,” and who bounced in his writings and from every pulpit a motto (by Pope Leo XIII), “Clergy out of the sacristy!” by which he intended to launch clergy and laity together to a more incarnated, less administrative and more apostolic, popular pastoral. What was needed, however, was a new style of priest, a new spirituality. Providence arranged for Don Orione to be “born” in this climate. Amidst a thousand practical difficulties and contrasts of all kinds, Bishop Bandi recognized him as “his own”, and indeed, “as a priest as is wanted by the Church and the new times.” A priest of faith who makes his life a fervent apostolate in favor of the poor and oppressed, as is the whole life and Gospel of Jesus Christ.”* (F. Peloso, Messages 77, p. 13)

In Don Orione's life it is worth noting a strong and relevant experience that contributed significantly to shaping his style, when he listened to the “cry of the poor” rising from the earthquake-stricken areas of Reggio and Messina, first, and then, Avezzano. *“The Father of orphans was born there and, like the man, his style. (...) It is a style referring to the*

Resurrection and is the synthesis of the Gospel.” In fact, “Resurrection is the suitable theme of Don Orione's igneous [ardent] style....” (cf. Raffaele Forni, Messages 31, p. 10-11).

St. John Paul II, in his address to the members of the 1992 Chapter, the one on “Being the Founder Today,” kept in mind the historical social and ecclesial context in which Don Orione lived, and concluded: *“What was needed was a new way of being 'salt and leaven in the world,' a new way of 'sowing and plowing Christ in the people.’”* But the Pope went further: *“It was the urgency of the Church of that time. And it remains the urgency of the Church today.”* Therefore, *“You are called to be, like your spiritual Father...”* (St. John Paul II, 5/16/1992).

Dear Confreres, let us look at the originality of Don Orione's style and conform more and more to his style: *“We are religious to the extent that it is no longer 'me' who acts, but it is 'Don Orione' who acts in me. His way of life, his thinking, his attitudes, must become my way of being.”* (Modules for the Ongoing Formation, 2022-2023, p. 20).

The Church awaits from us precisely this: the witness of Don Orione's original “way of being.” I recall the words of the Cardinal Archbishop of Rabat, when he invited us to open a presence in Morocco: *“The interest in the presence of your Congregation in Morocco does not have as its first motivation the solution of a concrete problem of the diocese, but to enrich this particular Church with the charism that the Spirit has raised, at the service of the Church and the world, through Don Orione, a charism of which you are the depositaries, the people in charge and its stewards. Therefore, the presence of a community of brothers is valuable in itself, beyond the task they perform or the works they animate. We are more interested in what you are and live than in what you can do and organize.”* It is very beautiful and uplifting when a confrere feels that he is responding to the missionary call because he recognizes in a particular place and ecclesial context the ideal place to develop his “Orionine style” even more: *“When I read that the congregation was going to Morocco, I said to myself, 'This is where I belong!' Morocco opens up interesting prospects: it would give me a chance to be close to the poorest of the poor; in contact with a culture and faith so rich and so distant....”*

The witness of our “being Orionine,” however, is not exclusive to Morocco. I think of many other places where Don Orione's style makes a difference. Among them, I am now thinking of the confreres who maintain their positions in Ukraine, particularly Don Moreno Cattelan who is in Kyiv.

To us today, his children, Don Orione keep repeating, *“The founders are you, I am but an elder brother called first by divine mercy in order of time, but you are the ones who keep the houses going, and who give a face to the Congregation. We must to be a doctrinal force in defense of the Church.... Either be as we should be or not be at all. It is a matter of life and death.”* (August 1934; Meetings 159-161).

The style for “throwing ourselves into the fire of the new times”

The 15th General Chapter presented us with a program for the sexennium based on “Let us throw ourselves....” We must ask ourselves: with what style will we present ourselves to the world and the Church to respond to the Founder's call and put the chapter program into action? What particular Orionine style do the “new times” we live in require? What aspects of the Orionine style would be strengthened in implementing such a program? What style of Orionine consecrated life is the Holy Spirit inspiring in us for credible and authentic witness?

These are questions that the Chapter's final document can help us answer. We must have it in our hands, but I present a summary prepared by the General Council. It is a “memorandum” to remind us of the priorities of our renewal and mission efforts.

The “Orionine style” required for “*Throwing ourselves...*,” according to the chapter program, is the style of the lover of the Word of God and the enthusiast for Don Orione and his charism. Here, therefore, are the two first orientations:

1. Falling in love with God and His Word

Falling in love with God and His Word by making Christ the center of our lives becomes the *sine qua non* for *throwing ourselves into the fire of the new times*. The Chapter has indicated to us as a special task for the sexennium the experience of encountering the Word of God in Lectio Divina and defined it as “*the highway to encounter Jesus, who enlightens and guides us in every moment of life*” (15CG, 8). This requires fidelity, perseverance, and pastoral creativity.

However, Lectio is not one more thing to do, but a process of immersion in the Word of God from which every other activity is born and draws its lifeblood. It brings us to the center of Christian spirituality, which is Jesus, our conversion and fellowship. Don Orione said, “*Let our first rule therefore be the observance of the Holy Gospel. But to observe the Gospel it is, first of all, necessary to know it: to know it well and then, with God's help, to live it, the Holy Gospel, to live it in spirit and form. (...) That is why the Imitation of Christ tells us from the very first chapter, ‘Let it be our highest study to meditate in the life of Jesus’. And it does not say meditate on the life, but in the life of Jesus, that is, enter into the interior and live of Jesus, of the life of Jesus.*” (Don Orione, 10/08/1935; Lettere II, p. 277; in the Notebooks Messaggi No. 121 there is a beautiful text entitled “At the School of the Gospel, St. Louis Orione's Suggestions for Reading and Living the Gospel”).

So: Is Christ truly the heart of my daily existence, of our apostolic programs and projects? Does our prayer help us to grow in spirituality, which means does it help me to have a “more Orione-like” style? Does it help me find insights and strength for my daily apostolate? How do you ordinarily live personal and/or communal contact with the Word of God? Is the Lectio Divina practiced in the community? And in the apostolate with people? Does the community schedule include time for daily Meditation?

2. Getting passionate about Don Orione and his holiness.

The Chapter highlighted that “*Our Founder lived a charism that is of extraordinary wealth.*” And St. John Paul II, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Founder's death (1990), exhorted us thus, “*Don Orione wanted to make Christ the heart of the world after having made Christ the heart of his heart. It is necessary, therefore, that his Religious Family, too, have its courageous optimism [and be ready] to respond with renewed impetus to the challenges of our age and the years to come, always turning its gaze toward the figure and examples of the Founder to be his living continuation.*”

The 15th General Chapter suggested us a concrete tool for a courageous adherence to and actualization of the Orionine charism in the practice of Lectio Orionina. It can help us grasp how the example of our Founder, and his first followers, has the power to enlighten our days, touch our different sensibilities, and generate desires for good.

Therefore: on a personal and/or community level, how are you deepening your knowledge of Don Orione's life and writings? Have we put in place any new initiatives to make the Founder known and promote his figure, spirituality, and work? Especially among young people? The Constitutions outline the style of the Orionine religious, and his identity. What are we doing to rediscover and consolidate the knowledge of our Constitutions and to actualize them in our lives?

3. Renew yourselves in everything! For our consecration to be prophetic

We dream of religious communities that are animated in expressing with different initiatives the spirit of a new style of Orionine religious life. In the Gospel, Jesus tells us, “*New wine in new wineskins*” (Mt 9:17). And Don Orione exhorts us, “*Renew or die... Renew yourself in everything! ... These words of mine are a little strong, but you take their substance and you will see the desire I have that the Congregation live the spirit of them and not become fossilized...*” (Meetings, 159).

The Chapter proposed four dimensions of our consecrated lifestyle that need to be renewed and strengthened so to be given an identity of Orionine religious, faithful both to the charism of origin and of today.

a) Living community dynamics with a more evangelical style.

We cannot hide the fact that in daily life it is difficult to practice fraternal life. We feel the need to improve the quality of our relationships, the time we spend listening and talking with our brothers, and overcoming the difficulty of expressing feelings of mutual benevolence. Don Orione calls us to live “*holiness in fraternal and sweet charity*” (Scritti 82,114). Pope Francis reminds us that “*living the present with passion means becoming 'experts in communion' ... In a society of confrontation, of difficult coexistence between different cultures, of overpowering the weakest, of inequalities, we are called to offer a concrete model of community that, through the recognition of the dignity of each person and the sharing of the gift of which each person is the bearer, allows us to live fraternal relationships.*” (21/11/2014)

The Chapter stimulates us to a lifestyle that helps us nurture and witness to the desire and beauty of fraternity, to give new impetus to our communities through a revision and change of spirit and structure, moving from a less hierarchical to a more synodal understanding of community life.

In our community, are we fostering new fraternal dynamics, not conditioned by old and traditional patterns related more to observance than substance? Is the spirit of family perceived in the community?

Is our apostolate the work of individual religious or of the community? How do we give a community style to our apostolate?

b) Addressing new poverty with the style of the poor.

Many desires have emerged in the congregation, and considerable efforts have also been made to meet the extreme poverty. However, we still note some fear and resistance to come out of our traditional activities and safe places, to face the new poverty and emerging situations (“fire”) of our times (“new times”) with a poor style. Don Orione taught us, “*It is not enough to*

say: we live poorly. It is not enough to say: that we made a promise to be poor! It is not enough! Marrying poverty means embodying in us the lives of the poorest, the most abandoned, the most outcast, the most afflicted. This is marrying poverty! (...) it is to love poverty, the portrait of Christ in our brothers, and to love it so much (...) and to live it so much, as the bridegroom loves the bride.” (Word 11:142).

The style of poverty that Don Orione passed on to us includes manual labor, “Holy fatigue” *“We are and want to be, with God's help, the priests of work. It is not only with sermons that souls are converted but also with work. And, if the Gospel came back into so many families in San Bernardino, it certainly did not come back because of the sermons of the provost of San Michele, you understand me, but because they saw the priests working. The people want to see real things!”* (Words 230). Therefore, not only “asking others to do,” but also “doing” in the first person.

Therefore: are we a Religious Family that moves more and more from works of charity to operating charity, placing more and more emphasis on the poor lifestyle among the poor, to give credibility to our charitable action? Are we communities at the forefront of the relationship with local poverty, with the problems of our people and society? What experiences of concrete sharing with the poor are in place?

c) *Growing as a Charismatic Family with the style of communion.*

In recent years we have experienced significant growth in our awareness of belonging to a large Charismatic Family, with increasingly fruitful potential. However, it is necessary to continue this journey of rediscovery, especially in the knowledge of the specific vocation of the various branches that compose it, and in the commitment to build an ever greater communion, to experience the appreciation and sharing of each one's talents in the service of the poorest (cf. GC XV nos. 77, 78).

Pope Francis reminds us that we are a *“single plant with many branches, made up of religious men and women, members of secular institutes and lay people, all nourished by the same charism of St. Louis Orione,”* and encourages us *“to travel along paths of collaboration among all the members of this rich charismatic family. No one in the Church walks 'alone.' Cultivate among yourselves the spirit of encounter, the spirit of family and cooperation”* (To the Chapter Members, 06/25/2023).

How are the relationships with the different members of the Orionine Charismatic Family? How are we promoting vocations from the different branches of the Charismatic Family?

d) *Administering the gifts of Providence with the style of sharing*

“We are but stewards of the properties of the Church and the poor: and to God, the Church and the poor we shall have to give an account.” (Letters I, 473) The Constitutions (No. 225) remind us that: *“the goods of our Little Work have an ecclesial character and must therefore be administered and employed with the greatest fidelity, with a view not only to the needs of the Congregation but also to those of the Church and the poor.”*

This is a strong reminder of our responsibility in the way we administer economic resources and transparency in the management of the goods that Providence gives us for the benefit of the poor.

Is there a synodal style in the economic management of the community/work/parish? Is there a spirit/commitment to transparency in economic dependence at the personal level to the community and from the communities to the province? Is there a commitment of all for economically responsible conduct of the Work, aiming at financial self-sufficiency, to contribute to a missionary impulse also in the economic dimension of one's own Community and Province?

Dear Brothers, Don Orione's style is the style of the saints, of those who were in habitual contact with the Lord. Someone said that standing before Don Orione was like standing before a "living tabernacle." His style was well summarized in these words:

"He was of medium stature, his person somewhat squat and curved at the shoulders, his forehead spacious and marked by deep wrinkles; lively eyes, in which black and white stood out mobile and penetrating, hair thick and white, gait grave, face almost always open to a smile. He suffered much, but he knew how to endure all, in sacrifice to God and all, to conceal so as not to burden others with his pain. He had none of what it takes, and is sometimes decisive, to make him an artist, a diplomat, an authoritarian leader. He had the eyes of a child, the voice of a brother, the hands of a peasant, and the solicitous step of the merciful shepherd. Nothing, then, to make him a famous man, but just enough to make him a saint." (Bishop Loris F. Capovilla, 07/12/1977; in: Messages 39, p. 15)

We thank the Lord for giving us St. Louis Orione as Father and Founder, who inspires us to live a lifestyle of total dedication to the proclamation of the Gospel. *"And let us implore from the Lord the grace that the fidelity of those who follow his examples and honor his memory may be glorified by Don Orione, and may the sentiments that he had dearest be transfused in us all: trust in the provident divine Goodness, filial adherence to the holy Church and passionate love for the little ones, the poor, the suffering, the neighbor in need of care and comfort."* (St. Paul VI, 12/23/1972).

Fraternally,


P. Tarcisio G. Vieira
Direttore generale

