

**Dear Brothers, Sisters
and Laity of the Orionine Family**

Deo gratias!

In the name of Our Lady Most Holy, the only and true Founder of the Congregation, I have the joy to announce that, on March 12th, the “*Dies Natalis*” of our Father Saint Luigi Orione, in Tortona, in the Shrine of “*Madonna della Guardia*”, at 5 pm, it will be made official the restructuring of the province of “*Notre Dame d’Afrique*”, which will include the nations of Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso and Morocco, while the other nations - Togo, Benin and Cameroon - will form a new Province, which will receive, as per tradition, a Marian title. The headquarters of the new province will be in Lomé (Togo). It is a decision that commits us a lot! We therefore trust in the intercession of the “*Mater Dei*” and in the support of our holy Founder.

After a long process of consultations and discernment, the General Council deemed the time had come to proceed with the restructuring of “*Notre Dame d’Afrique*”, having considered on the one hand the demographic and geographical growth of the Province, and on the other the undoubted advantages for religious people and communities, such as, among other things, the reduction of physical distances with the simplification of travel, the greater proximity of the provincial government, the more simplified management of administrative matters and the good functioning of the secretariats. With the hope that, by virtue of these more favorable conditions, the process of revitalization of the person of the religious and of the life of the community will have an impetus to strengthen the charismatic identity of the Congregation and make the Orionine mission in West Africa more prophetic.

The formation of the two provinces complied with the following criteria:

- A) The members of the Province are the religious of perpetual vows resident in the communities of the nations that make up the provincial reality;
- B) Communities that have identities of Formation or Government acquire a “special status” at the time of restructuring, and the religious of perpetual vows that compose them belong to the province corresponding to their nationality;
- C) The same criterion of nationality will be used for religious of perpetual vows who are inserted in communities abroad, if not incardinated in another reality of the Congregation.
- D) The religious of temporary vows always belong to the province corresponding to the nation of origin.

The official list of the members of each province, defined according to the criteria mentioned above, is presented in the annex, to make possible the beginning of the consultation for the appointment of the provincials and their respective councils.

We are aware of the great importance of this decision. Some feeling of turmoil and perhaps even of inner upheaval may come, but they will not be stronger than the feeling of deep joy in seeing the growth and expansion of Orionine's presence in African territory.

We are reassured by the words of Don Carlo Sterpi, the "most faithful of Don Orione", reported in the introduction of Chapter XIV of our Constitutions: *"The widening of the Congregation has imposed its division in so many Provinces, and, if it pleases the Lord that it will spread even more, other Provinces will also arise: however, all, if they want to live and prosper, must always be united as one with the whole body. And there must be division for the greater good of the body, as for a greater good of the individual parts: but, as the individual parts form the body, so as not to seem parts but to be a whole, so also the Provinces must not be things in themselves but form the Congregation."*

With the announcement of the date of the 12 March the process of restructuring, evidently, is not concluded but will need ulterior decisions in order to make the provision operative. Therefore, it will be necessary and fundamental the accompaniment of the General Council that, in harmony with the Provincial Council currently in office, will coordinate the process until June 29, 2024, when the new three years of government will begin and the provinces will become operational.

Other appropriate guidelines and instructions will be offered to keep us calm and industrious. For now, these indications are enough to organize, in particular, the consultation for the appointment of new provincials and councils.

I return, however, to the initial communication and my invitation: all, in presence or spiritually, in prayer, be with me on March 12, in the Shrine of the "Madonna della Guardia" in Tortona, before the body of Don Orione, at 5 pm, for the reading of the decree of restructuring of the Province "Notre Dame d'Afrique" and for the assignment of the Marian title to the new province.

We are in the year dedicated to the *Mater Dei*; I ask her, the Provident Mother, to accompany our journey and to make sure that the restructuring is a great step for the revitalization of our presence as a consecrated life in the territories of Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Morocco, Togo, Benin, Cameroon and many other nations. Let us pray together that all those who are most directly involved in the realization of this Family project may put the communion and the good of the Congregation above any personal desire or need.

Therefore, let's all be in Tortona, with the heart, with the prayer and, if possible, also with the physical presence, to the Sanctuary of the "Madonna della Guardia", March 12th, 2024, at 5pm.

I ask the confreres who are in the territories of the provinces to live the day in prayer and celebration, organizing liturgical celebrations and community events that express the joy of a passage that seals a significant development within the Little Work of Divine Providence.

Fraternally in the Lord,


P. Tarcisio Vieira
Direttore generale

