



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
BOLLETTINO

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHL
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

N. 170330e

Thursday 30.03.2017

Audience with participants in the General Chapter of the Order of Clerics Regular of Somasca

At 12.20 today, in the Consistory Hall of the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the 138th General Chapter of the Order of the Clerics Regular of Somasca, held in Albano Laziale, Rome, from 14 March to 1 April 2017 on the theme “*Let us go over to the other side of the lake with our brothers with whom we want to live and die*”.

The following is the full text of the Pope’s address to those present at the audience:

Holy Father’s address

Dear Brothers,

I am glad to welcome you and I greet you warmly, beginning with the Superior General, whom I thank for his words. The motto you have chosen for your general Chapter, “*Let us go over to the other side of the lake with our brothers with whom we want to live and die*”, is inspired by the words of Jesus (cf. Lk. 8:22) and refers to a crucial passage in the history of your Institute, grasping its prophetic value. Indeed, from 1921 a small group of Somascans left Europe for the distant shores of the American continent. It was a decisive missionary opening, which conferred new momentum and broad apostolic prospects to your religious family.

Now you have proposed to draw on the ideal motivations of that evangelizing impulse, to put them into effect today in the Church and in society, faithful to the charism of your Founder and taking into account the changing social and cultural conditions. In this discernment you are sustained by the spiritual fruits of the *Somascan Jubilee* 2011-2012, which have brought, and continue to bring, great benefits to your communities. In that significant circumstance, in which you gratefully commemorated the fifth centenary of the foundation of your Order, my venerated predecessor Benedict XVI sent a Message in which he urged you to follow the shining example of St. Jerome Emiliani, being sure to “take to heart every form of poverty in our young people, whether moral, physical or existential, and especially the poverty of love, the root of every serious human problem” (20 July 2011).

The ideal that drove Jerome Emiliani was the reform of the Church through works of charity. His plan was first to reform oneself in faithfulness to the Gospel, then the Christian communities and civil society, that cannot ignore the least and the marginalized but must instead go to their aid and promote their full human development. I too encourage you to remain faithful to the original inspiration and to “go out” towards injured and discarded humanity, with evangelically effective choices born of the ability to look at the world and at humanity with the eyes of Christ. The characteristic feature of your vocation is above all care for the least among us, especially orphans and troubled youth, according to the educational methods of your Founder, strongly focused on the person, on his or her dignity, and on the development of intellectual and manual abilities. And speaking of orphans, there are the new “semi-orphans”: those migrants, youngsters, children who come alone to our lands and are in need of paternal and maternal care. I would like to underline this: many come alone on the boats and are in need of this. This, among other things, is your task.

To make your service to the Gospel closer to the concrete situations of the life of people, you are working on new ways to accomplish your mission. In particular, starting from the current situation of your Order, you are facing the question of its international and intercultural features in relation to service to the poor and the least. I urge you to be attentive to the new forms of marginalization in the geographic and existential peripheries. Do not be afraid of “leaving the old wineskins”, addressing the transformation of structures where this prove useful to a more evangelical service that is more coherent with the original charism. These structures, in some cases, give false protection and limit the dynamism of charity and service to the Kingdom of God. I would like to repeat this: the structures, in certain cases, give false protection and limit the dynamism of charity and service to the Kingdom of God. But at the root of these processes there is always the joyful experience of the encounter with Christ and consecration to Him; there is the joyful demand of the primacy of God and of not placing anything before Him or things of the Spirit; there is the gift of expressing His mercy and His tenderness in brotherly life and in mission.

To offer adequate service in the field of child and juvenile disadvantage, you have the opportunity of involving Somascan laypeople, for greater effort in the social aspect of the charism. Human rights, protection of minors, the rights of children and adolescents, protection of child labour, and the prevention of exploitation and trafficking are the issues that must be faced with the liberating force of the Gospel, and at the same time, with suitable operational instruments and professional competences.

St. Jerome Emiliani, a contemporary of Luther, lived the laceration of Catholic unity with suffering; he cultivated and promoted in Italy the reform of the Church, “his most ardent thirst”, with works of charity, obedience to pastors, the contemplation of the crucified Christ and His mercy, catechistic teaching, fidelity to the Sacraments, the worship of the Eucharist, and love for the Virgin Mary. His example and his intercession drive us to consecrate our efforts to the proclamation of salvation in Christ, so that it may reach the people and communities of the nations in which you are present, and their traditions; in this way inculturation may proceed, the necessary condition for enabling the Church to take root in the world. In particular, I would like to encourage you to continue actively your work of forming catechists, lay animators and clergy. One of the gravest dangers, one of the strongest in the Church today, is clericalism. Work with laypeople, and may they carry on the work, may they have to courage to go on; while you sustain them and help them as priests, as religious. And this is a very valuable service to the local Churches, in communion with pastors and in union with all the Church and her living tradition.

Ecumenical dialogue also merits your contribution. The path to full unity is long, and requires patient listening to what the Spirit says to the Churches and, today in particular, to the ecclesial communities in Africa and in Asia, in which you work with apostolic zeal. The possible collaborations between all the baptized, and the search for greater fidelity to the one Lord, directly form part of the mission. May the Lord sustain your efforts in this regard.

Dear Brothers, there lies before you the task of continuing and developing the work, inspired by God, of St. Jerome Emiliani, declared by Pope Pius XI universal Patron of orphans and troubled youth. May renewed missionary zeal drive you to dedicate yourselves to the service of the Kingdom of God through the education of the young, so that they grow steadfast in faith, free and responsible, courageous in witness and generous in service. I encourage you to continue your journey of discipleship and your apostolic zeal, rich in numerous works and always open to new expressions, according the urgent needs of the Church and society in different times

and places. Faithful to the charism of the Institute and united with pastors, you will continue to make a fruitful contribution to the evangelizing mission of the Church. I ask the Holy Spirit, by the maternal intercession of the Virgin Mary, to enlighten you in the work of the Chapter, and I impart to you my heartfelt Apostolic Blessing.
