



To Most Rev. Father FRANCESCO PETRILLO
the Rector General
of the Clerics Regular of the Mother of God

I have known with joy that this Order is preparing to commemorate with a special Jubilee Year, the fourth centenary of the death of the founder, St. John Leonardi, happened on 9th October 1609 in Rome. Indeed, this is a real propitious occasion to deepen his spiritual message, which is also present in our time.

On this happy occasion, I would gladly be united with you and the Brothers around the world, and I extend my affectionate thoughts to the devotees and those who take part in the solemn jubilee celebrations, hoping with all my heart that these are all reasons for a renewed spiritual and apostolic zeal. I am sure that in the first place it will be the Institute of the Clerics Regular of the Mother of God to draw encouragement and inspiration by the example of the Founder to update the charismatic intuition, responding like this, as he did in his time, to the expectations and the challenges that the society brings forth at present to those who want to adhere closely to Christ. At the same time, this Jubilee Year will be a providential opportunity for every Christian community to give thanks to God for the abundant fruits of holiness and wisdom that has been given to this docile servant of the Lord.

John Leonardi shines in the firmament of the saints as a beacon of generous fidelity to Christ. In a society like that of convulsive post-Renaissance, between the second half of the 1500 and the first half of 1600, he did his best among his contemporaries so that they may return to shine the light of Christ and may feel the warmth of the merciful love of God. His heart and mind, constantly hidden with Christ in God, exercised, even among many disagreements and obstacles of all kinds, kept his charm to all who were drawn to an adventure of meeting him. He never tired of inviting everyone in to the Church to perform the necessary reform of their lives with the humble perseverance, to be more in accordance with the evangelical teachings. To Pope Paul V he wrote like this: "Do not search in the body that is not found in the head; starting from the first - cardinals, patriarchs, archbishops, bishops and priests, to those who are directly entrusted the care of souls - and going down till the last , namely the from the head of families till the children, so that they should not be overlooked by those from whom it must begin the reform of ecclesiastical morals "(From a letter of the Saint kept in the archives of the Order).

The secret of his intense apostolic activity, ranging from the catechesis of religious reform and the assistance to the marginalized of various kinds towards a planning of a wide missionary

activity and the commitment to the culture, is in absolute fidelity to a life dedicated to Christ in an absolute wholehearted manner. The recognition of the primacy of God, the importance of prayer, the practice of the Gospel without any compromise, are essential conditions to be authentic Christians.

This announcement and as lived St. John Leonardi, a tireless apostle who, without being disheartened by the opposition, became a reformer in the post Tridentine period in all levels, who worked with wider visions worked for the renewal of the various components of the Church, in line with his other contemporary saints such as Philip Neri, Charles Borromeo and Joseph Calasanz, From Heaven, at present he continues to support those who, following his teachings, are converted to God to be the apostles of the new evangelization.

I would like to recall that, just before his death, St. John Leonardi urged his brothers to be faithful to their vocation, the supernatural obedience, the mutual love and the continuous search for the Kingdom of God in order to achieve that Pauline Spectaculum facti sumus (1 Corinthians 4:9) so much dear to him. These consignments, which are almost his spiritual testament, at present he relies once again not only to religious family that he has found, the Clerics Regular of the Mother of God, but to any individual who wishes to strive for evangelical perfection.

I do wholeheartedly wish that the heroic witness of this fascinating man of God, recognized by the Church and again as a model to be followed to the men and women of our time, may increasingly be known and be a recall for many to live their faith with passion and enthusiasm in these present circumstances. With these sentiments and wishes, as I invoke the heavenly intercession of the Mother of God, I willingly impart to you, Most Rev. Rector General, and your brothers, a special Apostolic Blessing, that I do affectionately extend to all the devotees of St. John Leonardi.

From Gandolfo Castle, 9th September 2008

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