



Dear Brothers

The Solemnity of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary into Heaven, our heavenly patroness, offers me an opportunity to extend to all of you my paternal greetings and to intrust into your prayers this new sexennial that God offers us to walk together "Ready and Apostolic".

The passage from the Apocalypse that the liturgy of the Assumption proposes to us speaks of a woman in labour, she is engaged on two fronts: the personal one in giving birth to a child, in opening up to life a man; and her relational front, which sees her engaged to defending this son from the snares of evil ready to take the life of this child, yet God intervenes and rescues the child, bringing him to her, and the woman offering him a refuge.

The passage ends with the acclamation: "Now the salvation, the strength and the kingdom have been fulfilled of our God" which echoes with marvellous accents and in all its facets in the Magnificat of Mary proposed in the gospel. The Virgin sings at the same time about a God who is viscerally interested to her, to men and women of all generations, and does so concretely, with direct actions. God takes care of men and women of all times, God are moved by a visceral and unfathomable of which we have full and concrete experience!

The mystery of the Virgin Mother of God is fulfilled between the acceptance of the caring, diligent and effective action of God and the full availability to make present this God in action, Jesus himself, concrete Word of the Father, made flesh!

Mary sings about God who cares when already - speeded, without delay, without solution continuity - made the personal experience of the One who looked upon the humility of his servant and saved her by making her pregnant with her Life, she promptly sets out and reaches her cousin for to be with her, to take care of her, to bring to her that Care of him that inhabits her!

I asked myself: what does this say to us, Regular Clerics of the Mother of God, Reformed Priests of the Blessed Virgin Mary, returning from this 112<sup>th</sup> General Chapter? The answer is immediate, to us who have as our paradigm of Christian life that of the Virgin Mother of God, to us who wish to give Marian style to our consecration to the Father by following Christ in the footsteps of John Leonardi, the feast of our heavenly patroness suggests as a key to every decision already made and of every discernment to be carried out: that of taking care!

Of taking care, feeling a diligent and caring interest in the other, which bond both our soul and our activity. Letting oneself be moved swiftly towards the other by the same impulse of God, who for us men and for our salvation became incarnate in the womb of the Virgin Mary and became man.

The Founder would perhaps say put your heart into the affairs of the Congregation, feel each one responsible for each other in the measure of Christ, and at the same time for all those who, believers like Elizabeth or unbeliever like Zechariah, God wants to reach out to save them from evil and bring them to himself!

The Assumption also reminds us of this: God is our refuge in the desert of human egos; He leads us up to Himself, through His Son, crucified and risen for us. Mary, who made herself made herself a gift to God and man already participates in this salvific dimension, she is present as a sign of sure hope! Mary inserts us into

this ecstatic movement of God, an intimate motion to go out of self to meet the other, to be close and prodigal.

Proximity and concrete care: this is the pastoral conversion to which we are called.

To constitute ourselves in a state of mission, with eyes, ears, and above all an open heart, to grasp the needs and requirements of our brothers and sisters, to give greater glory to God and glorify him in the service we offer them in his name.

But who is our neighbour? I would say to begin by literally caring for those who are closest to us, who shares fraternal life with us, who is part of our communities: every brother. He who participates with me in the joy of bringing to men the treasure received, though in the constitutive fragility of the vessel, willing, however, to allow himself to be moulded, re-formed continuously by the Divine Potter.

Let us take care of ourselves, in our communities, in being together before God, in fidelity to the rhythms of common prayer, which is the missionary breath of the Order. Let us take care in savouring the joy of fraternal life, in shared formation, also in those paths of reconciliation indispensable to overcome the pitfalls of conflict, to heal the wounds that fraternal life entails. Let us take special apostolic care, as our charisma requires, of Formation Communities, as a forge of religious. Let us take special care of Formative Communities as a forge of religious "apostolic life" according to the desire of St John.

From the community experience of God, who cares for us through us, we can move promptly and with maximum commitment, as the F.D. of the General Chapter in No. 7 with the words of the Founder that invites us to do, take care of the Church and all those "places of social distress or of immorality, of slavery and exploitation, of immigration, of violence".

In this time of grace, let us glorify God together for the gift of new novices in Indonesia (Roberto Carlos and Rupertus Sumardi) and in Nigeria (Nnamani Solomon, and Andrew Asiegbu), for the gift of the next temporary profession in Italy (Luigi Bilotto), and the imminent priestly ordination of our brothers in Nigeria (Philip Okafor, Emmanuel Agber and Emmanuel Udoh).

I wish all every grace of God through the intercession of the Queen of Angels, our refuge and protection, and of St John Leonardi our father.

San Ferdinando di Puglia, 5 August 2022

Devoted

P. Antonio Luigi Piccolo

Rector Generalis