

Centenary of the birth into heaven of SAINT JOSEPH ALLAMANO

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HOLINESS AND “GOD ALONE!”

St. Joseph Allamano had a high idea of mission: his was not just philanthropy, volunteering, occasional commitment... Since mission is linked to the saving action of God, he considered the values of the “spirit” to be of fundamental importance.

He always demanded the best from his Missionaries, especially in this aspect. Holiness was a necessity for the mission: “first saints and then missionaries”; (to the Sisters) “Being good is not enough; better is not enough; excellent!”; “Yes. God alone. Everything for God, everything from God, everything in God” (*This I want you to be*, p. 132). “Let’s keep our eyes fixed on high! Our aim is there: God alone!” (*This I want you to be*, p. 147).

In the common imagination, however, the mission was thought of as doing, realizing, building, founding... Always and anytime, it was characterized by activity. Joseph Allamano instead focused heavily on “passivity”, on the acceptance of values, on being always busy in doing (the image of the “basin” he often uses in his conferences is effective).

Monsignor Vacha Emilio, a priest from Turin, left the following significant testimony on the occasion of the process for the

Beatification of Allamano: “In 1903, going to Rome to collect the relics of the martyr Adeodato, Can. Allamano instructed me to look for a “holy body” (bone relic) also for the Consolata Missions, but two days later he wrote to me not to worry about the famous relic anymore, because “the Saint will be found among my dear Missionaries.” That expression was not just a pious wish but reflected what Allamano’s constant concern was instead: to help his missionaries become saints. He did not want relics of saints in the Institute, but living saints!

It is significant that the editors of “*This I want you to be*” put as the first chapter: “Holiness and mission, the aim of the Institute”. In fact, Allamano wanted holiness to come first always: “Missionaries, men and women, yes, but saints”. It was the *leitmotif* of all his teaching. Since there are many quotes in this regard, only one is proposed: “Some believe that being a missionary consists entirely of preaching, being on the move, baptizing, saving souls; no, no! This is only the secondary aim: we sanctify ourselves first and then others. The more holy one is, the more souls he will save” (Conf. IMC. III, 258) (his manuscript). “Everyone says that you came to become missionaries; but no: first of all, you must say: I have come to become a saint!” (Conf. IMC, III, 659).

IMC Constitutions, following the Founder's teaching, succinctly outline the path to realizing the missionary vocation: “The aim that characterizes us in the Church is the evangelization of peoples; we achieve it for the glory of God and in the sanctity of life, as understood by the Founder, when he reiterated: “First saints, and then missionaries” (5).

Some characteristics of the style of holiness according to Joseph Allamano

Feeling in the company of the Saints

St. Joseph Allamano not only fed himself on the teachings and examples of the Saints but also wanted to give them to us as protectors or patrons. The book “*Choosing flowers from flowers*” by Fr.

Francesco Pavese demonstrates this amply. He wanted us not only to pray to our Protectors to ask for their intercession, but that they become our models of life and inspiration in living the mission.

Holiness in the plural

Allamano wanted us to help ourselves become saints; also, for this reason he wanted to give us the family spirit as a characteristic of the Institute. Since the time of the Founder, the call to holiness has always resounded and continues to resonate in our Institutes. It is enough to recall the biennium on sanctity, celebrated in the years 2006-2008. Its fruit was also the beautiful publication “The Consolata missionary, saint” (2012). A strong appeal then came from our two General Directions to “make ourselves saints together”. *“Holiness is not just a 'personal affair' nor is it just the fruit of an individual journey. Just as mission tends towards communion with God and among us, so holiness of life is nourished by communion and leads to communion; this ideal is dear to the Founder who exhorted: 'All together we will help each other to become saints'...”*

Jesus - excellent model

Allamano's sanctity has a strong Christological stamp: Jesus is the model *par excellence* of apostolic holiness. Allamano was very clear on this aspect, so much so that he indicated Jesus as the model of any virtue. In this way the Founder aimed directly at Jesus on his path towards holiness: following him, learning from him, imitating him, in communion with him in the Eucharist. Jesus was always the constant point of reference in his life, and he wanted it to be so for his disciples too.

With perseverance, following the example of St. Joseph Cafasso

After the beatification of Joseph Cafasso who was given to us as a Special Protector, Allamano made an interesting comment: “The heroism of his virtue consists in constancy. Heroism does not consist in performing miracles, but being severe with oneself in perseverance, in always being where one is supposed to be with a good will, in not wasting time: this is our stuff. I admire this man's

life more every day, because he was always coherent, no, he always went straight; his path was that and... forward; and he did this throughout all his life. Always the same faith, the same love of God and neighbour; always prudent, always just, always temperate... he lacks nothing [...], he always moved forward; he always did everything well” (see *This I Want You to be*, p. 178).

For personal reflection

“*The Consolata missionary, saint*”, Rome 2012.

This is how I want you to be, chap. 1.

F. Pavese, “*Choosing flowers from flowers*”, 2014

- ✓ On the centenary of the Founder's birth in Heaven, which aspect of his holiness do I feel I need to value most in my life?
- ✓ Which saint, among those proposed by Allamano, serves as my greatest teacher and guide, and why?
- ✓ The Word of God, the Eucharist, devotion to the Consolata were the salient aspects in St. Joseph Allamano's path towards holiness. Are they all part of my spiritual commitment?