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## NEWSLETTER DEL SUPERIORE GENERALE



Dear confreres,

Our holy Founder's Feast is at hand! Together with the desire for a devout and creative celebration that each of you will hold in the proper community and mission stations, I wish to join each of you also with an exhortation, which seems to be more obvious and urgent than ever for the time which we are living, a time of evaluation, in the light of the holiness of our Father and Founder, of our personal and community holiness.

Since a long time, in the tradition of the Church and particularly in this time Pope Francis urges us to rethink the holiness of our lives as consecrated people starting from humanity. Just abandoning methods, behaviors, signs that today are incomprehensible to the people whom we approach. That is, giving sense in the present world with characteristics that could become an understandable and usable path for our time, bearing valid answers to the current question of the meaning that dwells in the heart of humanity.

Certainly, many will be amazed themselves: is the consecrated lifestyle of our first confreres no longer valid today? Is the witness we offer enough, to the people today, even though we carry out our ministry with difficulties and many disappointments?

For the above said provocations, my answer is: not enough!

We must adapt ourselves to the needs of today's world language, just to be a sign, an orientation, an aid to the people's personal holiness. It is no longer satisfactory according to the mission of consecrated life witnessed always during the centuries, it does not satisfy anymore to go on with an inappropriate communication, behaviors, ideas that people today do not understand!

We too, like other religious institutes, should be capable to announce that we are living according to Fr. Guanella's teachings, but not like Fr. Guanella's time. Today's world demands other ways of approach from us. As a matter of fact, the scarcity of vocational responses present in our Provinces, which could be motivated by this misunderstanding of an inappropriate communication between us and today's world.

I refer only to the propositional results of a study on this topic that the magazine «Testimoni» (witnesses) presented in its pages as "New Perspectives of Spiritual Life". I leave it to you to read the analysis and comparisons in your respective communities for a meaningful reflection. In fact, I think it is also a duty for us Guanellians to establish a comprehensive dialogue with the people today.

In Italy, with «third-sector law»<sup>1</sup>, we are studying new ways of managing works and structures. I am convinced that it is a favorable occasion to leave our religious communities in this reformulation of our mission as consecrated persons. I ask the Founder as a gift at his feast to give us the capacity to believe that this change is necessary. At the same time, to make our gift, even though it's small, in order that fruitful changes will happen in his Congregation.

### **Implications of a new paradigm of holiness:**

1). "I want the church to be in the streets" Pope Francis mentioned. He has also invited us several times; "to leave" in order to "find". This means that nowadays those forms of discipleship that lead to integration among people are attractive, opening space for new themes of life, happiness, freedom, vulnerability, sensitivity, tenderness, with models of communion that assume characteristics of human and religious values in the areas where we are inserted" (MD Chenu). From this sharing, Religious Life can fulfill its indispensable role among the people of God.

2). Considering spirituality as a successful workshop for humanity. Those forms of life that derives from the Gospel, are truly "spiritual", which inspires that believing is not restraining humanity, vitality, beauty, spontaneity, indeed they lead them to the plenitude.

3). Having on the ability to arouse an attitude of admiration and awe like the first community in Jerusalem. We must be able to remove the idea that the important virtues are abandonment, submission, painful asceticism, contempt for goods, fear of love, legalistic rigidity. It is not the destruction of the values in the way we grew in the formation, but rather making them acceptable through a peaceful lifestyle, which instills admiration, awe, interest. They are not supposed to generate fear and inability since this kind of formation is too distant and difficult to assimilate among young persons today. For me it seems that the more appropriate word could be "witnessing".

4). Creating opportunities to discuss new themes of life. For example, happiness, freedom, sensitivity and also pointing out some of the most urgent social virtues, such as responsibility, justice, safeguarding creation, tolerance, peace, etc. These are themes, that Pope Francis frequently evokes. Which contributions are we the Guanellians giving with our lives as consecrated people with our mission as good Samaritans in the questions presented to all humanity by the Church?

5). Becoming "revolutionaries" where the family, education, charity, the promotion of the person, politics, the economy are at risk, where salvation is at stake, not only for people, but also for institutions. It is what Pope Francis asks to Religious Life today. Perhaps in our history as a Congregation we have generally never dealt with this aspect, we always prefer to

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<sup>1</sup> Third sector organizations is a term used to describe the range of organizations that are neither public sector nor private sector. It includes voluntary and community organizations (both registered charities and other organizations such as associations, self-help groups and community groups), social enterprises, mutuals and co-operatives. So religious congregation could enter in this kind of organization.

be men of peace, tranquility, waiting for the serene life. But the prophets who were the “powerful voice” of the Gospel alongside the poor also occasionally appeared among the Guanellians. I remember Fr. Antonio Ronchi, who in the depths of Chile moved the mountains by being the voice of the last obtaining solutions and interests from the powerful people.

Of course, these characteristics do not mean to throw away our original charism, certainly not! But if our communities would be really opened to the territory where they are located and would offer a personal and community testimony availability to these external provocations, without believing that what we do within our services is enough for us, I think that this awakening that everyone expects from Religious life would also shine again in our Congregation.

In the canonical visit and the visits to the communities that I made in these two years, I noticed some beautiful and significant attempts to bring about something new. Go forward with determination and goodwill!

The Church tells us that this is the right way to live our charism, more than ever, because it is a gift from God at the service of humanity today.

I take this opportunity to thank each one of you for your testimony and the effort to live the Guanellian charism and mission. Thank you, confreres, on behalf of the Founder!

I thank you all again for the guanellian ministry you will do with creativity in the forthcoming days, best wishes to you, to the Sisters and Cooperators, to your collaborators and to those who live in our homes, placing your trust in us. Happy feast of St. Louis Guanella! May he bless us and help us with his protection!

In Charitate Christi

Rome, October 24<sup>th</sup> 2020- Feast of Saint Louis Guanella

